

竜殺しの 過ぎる日々

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Ryuugoroshi no Sugosuhibi

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Chapter 17: The aimless, leisurely travel through the domain

The three teleported near a town that's near the domain. The distance from the town to the domain is about six hours by foot, straight east.

The town's name is Aterio. Besides the travelers that come here to either enter or pray at the domain, it's just a small town with no specialties.

North of Aterio is the city that's planning on holding the martial tournament. It'll take about seven days to reach that town by foot from Aterio.

The three entered the town to find an inn.

Since Kousuke would be setting out on the same day, the room was meant for Viare and Alice.

They entered the room and Kousuke was told the various details of "Columudg".

「When you enter "Columudg", head to the forest in the northeastern area. The shrine is located in there. If you travel from this town to the domain, you

should see a marshland the moment you enter. You can travel through it, but some parts are very deep so be careful. If you continue traveling straight you should see a river. There are monsters that live in that river, but you shouldn't have any problems with them if you fly over the river. Past the river should be the forest with the shrine. The most important thing to do is to not kill too many animals or monsters in there. The same applies for the herbs and ores. Although, if it's to protect yourself then killing them is fine. Killing for the sake of killing is prohibited in there」(Alice)

「What happens if someone does that?」(Kousuke)

「It was recorded that the person would get forcefully expelled」(Alice)

「I'll be careful then. Hmm, then one last thing, what are the characteristics of the herb in question?」(Kousuke)

「It's called "Italmik" and it's an herb that blooms a small, pale blue flower. There are four oval leaves on it. The leaves grow near the roots of the herb and the stem is about five centimeters tall. If it's in that domain's forest then it should be growing everywhere. Make sure you gather the entire thing, roots included」(Alice)

「Got it. I'll be heading out soon then. I'll leave the things I don't need to bring with you then」(Kousuke)

「Have a nice trip」(Alice)

「Please be careful to not get hurt」(Viare)

The two saw Kousuke off.

The moment he left the town he immediately flew towards “Columudg”. The direction of the domain had dark clouds in the sky, it looked like it was going to rain.

『I probably won't get sick from the rain since its summer, but I really don't want to get drenched』He thought as he flew.

Two hours of flying later, Kousuke noticed a swarm of tents and people below. He figured that this was the domain's boundary.

He slowed down his speed and look down at the people below before entering into the domain. The group of people prayer down below never noticed Kousuke overhead.

His other reason for slowing down was because the possibility of crashing into an invisible wall wasn't zero. In truth, all he felt was a tiny sensation, like a soap bubble landing on him. He was safely able to enter the domain.

He landed after he flew deeper into the domain. He didn't want to land too close to the boundary since the people praying would see him and possibly

cause a scene. He also didn't want to use all of his mana just in case magic was needed.

「I'm glad there's at least something like a road here」(Kousuke)

Rather than calling it a road, it was just sparse sand bars that dotted the marshland. It was better than trudging through mud though.

Right when he was about to travel onward.

「The brother over there!」(???)

He was suddenly yelled at. The voice sounded like it came from a child.

Kousuke was startled by the voice and swiftly turned around and looked down at the source of the voice. He was surprised since he couldn't sense the person's presence at all. From his experience so far, anything within a few dozen meters of him that wasn't intentionally hiding their presence would be noticeable. But he wasn't able to pick up the slightest bit of presence of the

person that yelled out to him even though he could sense other life forms in the marshland.

Behind a thin tree, a small boy around eight years old hopped out into the open. He had dark green hair, a dark green short sleeve shirt, and a light brown shorts on.

「Is.. Is something the matter? This place isn't somewhere a small child should be」(Kousuke)

「I came here in my father's place to gather herbs. I was able to avoid bumping into any monsters so far, but I don't think my luck will continue past this point. And while I was trying to figure out what to do, I saw you drop down from the sky. Hey! Since you're here it means you're heading to the shrine right? Please take me with you, PLEASE!」(???)

Kousuke was too good-natured to leave a child like this alone in a dangerous place so he nodded.

「I don't mind taking you with me, but why did you come? Was there no one else older that could to this?」(Kousuke)

The child shook his head.

「Only my father and I have a title that allows us to enter this domain」(???)

Kousuke figured that the child had no escorts since there were no adventurers around that could enter this domain. Otherwise, who would let a child go into such a place alone?

「Ah, I see. I'm Kousuke. Call me Kousuke, Niichan, Oniisan, or whatever else you want to call me」(Kousuke)

「Then I'll call you Oniisan. I'm called Lin. Please take care of me!」(Lin)

「Me too」(Kousuke)

The two finished introducing each other and began walking.

The surrounding was filled with marshes, there were no signs of the river or forest. On occasion eel-like monsters with sharp fangs or plants with scythe-like roots would assault them, but Kousuke repelled them with his sheathed sword. The two proceeded without any issues.

Then, a small problem came up that made the two stop.

「There's no more road to walk on...」(Kousuke)

「Yea, what should we do? I can't tell by looking if its shallow or deep now」
(Lin)

「I can carry you and fly. Sound good?」(Kousuke)

「Will your mana last? It looked like to get here you were flying as well」(Lin)

「I'll be fine」(Kousuke)

He casted the spell and carried Lin. Kousuke flew at a reasonable speed to not scare Lin.

Despite flying high up in the sky, he couldn't see any signs of the river. Perhaps he would end up spending the rest of the day just to get out of the marshland. On the other hand, he could see some rocks to the south. It looked about four hours away even if they flew.

「There's still a long way to go...」(Kousuke)

At Kousuke's words, Lin nodded.

After flying for fifteen minutes, Kousuke spotted a road so they landed.

As the two walked, the edges of the marshland came into sight, but they also saw raindrops splashing into the marshes. It wasn't raining hard, but drizzling strong enough to create a heavy fog. The clouds in the sky seemed endless, it looked like the rain won't stop any time soon.

Kousuke took off his jacket and covered Lin from the rain with it.

「We managed to get out of the marshland, but we'll definitely get drenched by this rain. Lin, did your father tell you of any place that might work as a shelter around here?」(Kousuke)

「I think there should be some caves near the marshlands. He told me to rest there for the night」(Lin)

「Come to think of it we did see that before. Let's head there then」(Kousuke)

「Mm」(Lin)

The two restarted their walking and headed toward to caves they saw before.

When they entered a cave they spotted remnants of a campfire and a small resting area left behind by previous travelers.

Kousuke took out towels to dry themselves off and started a campfire using the leftover firewood to dry their clothes.

「It's starting to rain harder now. I hope it won't continue past the night」
(Kousuke)

The sound of raindrops hitting the ground became louder. The rain became stronger overtime and didn't stop the entire night.

「Let's quickly eat something and get some sleep. Sound good Lin?」(Kousuke)

「Mm. I'm tired too」(Lin)

Despite stating his weariness, his voice sounded quite energetic.

Kousuke took out the rations and a pot filled with water he conjured using magic to make a simple soup. He considered making enough for breakfast the next day, but stopped since it might spoil overnight.

Since Kousuke only brought one bowl, they took turns to eat. Lin also brought some rations, but completely forgot to bring tableware.

When they finished eating, they cleaned the dishes with water and promptly lied down to sleep.

Kousuke glanced at Lin and saw him bundled up in the blanket with his eyes closed. Kousuke followed suit and also closed his eyes to sleep. His experience with Tony and the escort mission trained Kousuke to react instantly if anything happened while he slept.

That night, ignoring the one time when something's presence drew close before withdrawing, was peaceful so his vigilance was unnecessary. That presence withdrew instantly when Kousuke stared at its direction.

The two woke up, had breakfast and resumed their travel through the wilderness. The rain from yesterday softened the ground, but compared to the marshes, the puddles and mud didn't slow them down one bit. The clouds thinly blanketed the entire sky and the two were grateful for the weakened sunlight.

Past noon, around four o'clock, the two arrived at the river. The river was 80 meters wide. From a quick look around they couldn't see anything resembling a bridge.

「The rain yesterday made this river bigger」(Kousuke)

The current was strong and the water level was abnormally high.

「It would be nice if we could fly over, but it seems dangerous right now」
(Kousuke)

The clouds in the sky were starting to darken. It didn't rain yet, but they could hear the thunder's rumbling and the lightning in the clouds were brightening the sky. If they flew up carelessly, it was likely they would get struck by lightning. Kousuke could probably survive a lightning strike, but it would be a fatal strike for Lin.

【TL: Thunder = the sound, Lightning = the actual electrical bolt. I know some of you may know, but I hear it used interchangeably constantly and it bugs me...】

Their other option to swim through the river was equally bad though. With the current's strength, Lin would more than likely get swept downstream. Also, the monsters in the river would make it impossible to swim across safely.

「We can try to find a more shallow point to cross, but if we can't do you mind if we camp out for the night?」(Kousuke)

「Mm」(Lin)

They kept a five meter distance from the river as they walked downstream.

Unlike Kousuke who was absentmindedly staring at the river, Lin was

observing the river with a curious glint in his eyes. The violent current piqued his interest. Lin understood the dangers of a strong current, but his childish curiosity was getting the better of him.

「Hm? Hey, it's dangerous if you get close to the river」(Kousuke)

「I want to take a closer look for a bit」(Lin)

「You may slip on the edge and fall into the river you know?」(Kousuke)

「So no?」(Lin)

「Yea it's a no」(Kousuke)

To that response, Lin lowered his head in a downcast manner. Kousuke was a little saddened to see him like that, but he couldn't give permission to do something dangerous to another person's child.

Five minutes later, they spotted rocks in the river that provided footing to cross. If the river was calm it would be a perfect way across.

「I think it'll be safe if I'm careful enough. Lin, give me your hand」(Kousuke)

He held Lin's hand and got closer to the river.

The depressed Lin's expression suddenly began to sparkle.

Kousuke had his sword in the other hand to fight off any monsters that may suddenly appear.

「Can we cross using this?」(Kousuke)

The rocks were barely visible above the water and would occasionally get drowned out by large waves.

In this situation, if he was alone then it could work, but he has Lin with him right now and he figured it would be difficult to carry him across this.

While Kousuke was thinking, Lin was trying to lean over the edge to look into the river but realized his mistake. Kousuke was still holding his hand so he couldn't sit down to get a closer look. Nevertheless, he barely managed by leaning as close as possible towards the river. Something noticed Lin and its

pale blue octopus-like tentacle shot out from the river.

「Uwaaa!?!」(Lin)

It gripped Lin's arm and tried to drag him into the water. Lin's face was strained while enduring the pain from being pulled back and forth.

「Tsk」(Kousuke)

Kousuke clicked his tongue, feeling irritated for not noticing the monster's presence. He immediately swung his sword and dismembered the tentacle attached to Lin.

He grabbed Lin and distanced himself from the river.

He became cautious in case the monster came out, but it didn't chase and the river's state was the same as before.

「Probably a bad idea to cross that huh...」(Kousuke)

Since he's unable to sense anything in the river, his plan to carry Lin and cross over was dropped and decided to camp for the night.

He unwrapped the tentacle on Lin's arm and grimaced slightly at the slightly swollen arm.

「Lin, are you alright?」(Kousuke)

「Mm」(Lin)

「Really? It doesn't hurt?」(Kousuke)

「Mm. I'm fine」(Lin)

He shook his arm to show its fine.

「I see. We'll be resting around here until the river calms down. Let's unpack」
(Kousuke)

The two distanced themselves from the river, dropped their bags and sat on the dry ground.

The dark clouds in the sky slowly dispersed as the sun set and around 8 o'clock at night they were all gone. The night sky was completely clear and a beautiful starry view could be seen.

For dinner, Kousuke prepped the rations and grilled the dismembered tentacle, but Lin refused to eat the tentacle so Kousuke ate it all. It was a nostalgic moment for Kousuke to be able to eat Japanese food again.

As a precaution he casted a pesticide and poison removal magic on the tentacle before eating. His first bite was small and cautious, but it was unexpectedly delicious and it vanished instantly. 『It would have been more delicious with sauce or wasabi soy sauce』thought Kousuke while Lin's eyes were reflecting disbelief at Kousuke's actions.

The following morning. The originally violently flowing river was absolutely calm. The water was still difficult to see through, but the rocks' positions were firmly recognizable.

Kousuke felt confident that he would be able to sense the monsters now so he carried Lin and lightly hopped from one rock to another. Just like yesterday,

an octopus tentacle attacked them but Kousuke was able to ward them off without issue.

「We made it」(Kousuke)

He lowered Lin down and turned around. The octopus tried a last ditch effort to attack once more, but failed. 『What a waste』Thought Kousuke, as the tentacle he just lopped off fell into the river. He then urged Lin away from the river.

「The shrine is in that forest right? It's a bit far」(Kousuke)

While focusing his gaze, he pointed at the small green area in the distance. It seemed Lin could see it too since he nodded.

「Yea, it's over there」(Lin)

「Think we can make it to that forest within by today?」(Kousuke)

If they walk then Kousuke has to match Lin's pace, making their travel slow. He set an ETA while taking that into consideration.

Kousuke and Lin leisurely began their travel since it's not like the forest would run away.

Noon came around so the two stopped to have lunch. The two's surrounding was an open field with grass and a few large boulders. The sky was clear with the occasional bird monsters dotting it. The two managed to survive through the heat with the occasional breeze and magic ice wrapped in a towel. It was unthinkable to wear a jacket in this heat so it was wrapped around his waist.

「Once again, its rations. I hope when we enter the forest we'll find something else to eat」(Kousuke)

「My father said there are」(Lin)

「Really? That's a huge relief to know」(Kousuke)

As expected, eating rations every meal was getting tedious. He sighed in relief knowing there's something else to eat soon.

Finished with lunch, the two began cleaning up but suddenly heard a bird monster's cry from overhead. And that cry was getting louder by the moment.

「A monster?」(Kousuke)

He drew his sword and looked up. As expected, a bird monster was flying down towards them.

But everything wasn't as expected! Behind that one bird monster were four more and were speeding up even more seeing Kousuke and Lin standing still. Furthermore, they weren't disorganized, but flying in a V-formation.

They're called "Trooper Eagles" and they hunt as a highly organized group. He saw a few of them before when he entered the domain, but this was the first time they attacked.

「Lin! Get behind me!」(Kousuke)

He hid Lin behind him and considered using the gust magic. It was instantly dismissed. He wouldn't have enough time to use it.

Kousuke took up a stance and waited for the monsters' attack.

A few seconds later, when the monsters were about three meters away from Kousuke, they twisted their wings slightly and abruptly changed their direction. Normally, doing that would be strenuous and painful for a bird, but because they were monsters they were able to continue flying without pause or discomfort.

The main goal of the Trooper Eagles wasn't Kousuke, but his bag instead.

The leading three monsters plunged their talons into his bags and flew up. The remaining two plunged toward Kousuke to distract him.

Unable to move because he was protecting Lin, his bags were stolen.

After warding off the two, Kousuke turned his gaze toward the escaping three and casted a strong gust toward them to strike them down.

The three birds shook violently and dropped the bags, but the remaining two swooped in and retrieved it. In the end, his bags were stolen.

「I've been had!」(Kousuke)

From their mobility and speed difference in the air, Kousuke knew he wouldn't be able to catch them.

「Why did they take your bags?」(Lin)

「They were probably after the rations inside」(Kousuke)

「Those monster's sense of smell is that strong? Well, no point crying over spilled milk. Kousuke, something fell out of the bag earlier so let's at least retrieve that」(Lin)

Even though the important things were stored away back at the inn, all of his travel goods were in the stolen bags. Thinking about what he'll do from now on, it would be a wonder if he didn't sigh in frustration.

They recovered a pot, some salt and a few water bottles. The current Kousuke only had what he retrieved, the towel on his neck, the clothes on his back and his sword.

Lin's belongings were intact.

「The loss of food is the biggest problem. It's true I was bored of it.. But that doesn't mean I wanted it to disappear!!!」(Kousuke)

「I'll give you some of mine! Plus, we'll be able to get more once we reach the forest」(Lin)

「That would be great」(Kousuke)

The only problem with gathering food in the domain was if the poison removal spell didn't work and they get poisoned.

Kousuke wasn't too willing to become a poison taster, but he travelled on, albeit in low tension.

Within the day, the two stopped and camped about an hour away from the forest. He confirmed the amount of rations left and knew they had to search for food in the forest now. They only had enough to last until lunch the next day.

「Alright, so we'll soon be entering the forest. There doesn't seem to be much food at first glance though」(Kousuke)

「There really isn't any」(Lin)

「By the way Lin, do you know where the shrine is located inside? I was only told that its somewhere in the forest」(Kousuke)

「I don't know either. I know that it's very small, even if you fly up you won't see it」(Lin)

「I see. Just when I was considering flying around to look for it... Oh well, guess we'll just have to search for it on foot. Let's go」(Kousuke)

With the leaves blocking the blazing sunlight, the two travelled through the cool forest. There wasn't anything like a road in the forest so they chose paths with the least bushes. He avoided cutting through the bushes since he thought it might be considered "pointless killing".

He stayed vigilant for any presence of beasts(food) and observed his surroundings carefully for fruits and mushrooms as they proceeded. Because of that, the two did not speak. Before, the two would chat and sing to relieve their boredom, but the two urgently needed food so even Lin was cautiously observing his surroundings.

Mushrooms were the easiest to spot. Still, they couldn't determine if all of them were safe to eat. The two also never felt any presence of animals nearby, even with Kousuke's ability to sense nearby presences. Unfortunately, the animals and monsters in the area were afraid of Kousuke and were hiding,

making his ability to sense presence pointless since it only works against beings that aren't hiding. The current Kousuke isn't able to find anything as long as they hid.

In the end, their meals for the day were mushrooms that Lin said were safe and nuts they found. He was grateful they had food to eat, but it was tasteless.

The following day the two continued to search for the shrine and gather more food. Kousuke's desire for delicious food and his incredible comprehension skill allowed him to learn how to feel hidden presences within that day.

The next day after, he was able to hone in on the general locations of the presences more accurately and was finally released from the vegetarian diet.

Since Kousuke has no knowledge on how to set up a trap, he used "Earthen Spear" in the general location of the presence. Since he still wasn't able to feel the exact location of the beasts, he spam casted in hopes of eventually hitting it.

「Today I ate well!」(Kousuke)

He exclaimed while rubbing his stomach and tossing away a bone.

Despite it just being salted, Kousuke was grinning happily since his previous

vegetarian diet was truly tasteless.

They weren't able to finish the hare they caught so Kousuke chopped it up into smaller pieces and wrapped it up in a thoroughly cleaned leaf. It was stored with crushed ice to make it last longer.

「Hm?」(Kousuke)

Right when the two were about to resume their search, Kousuke sensed a number of hidden presences encroaching them slowly.

Guessing they were monsters, Kousuke casted "Guard" on Lin and told him to stay still.

『Were they attracted to the blood of the hare we caught?』Kousuke thought. In fact, the two were far away from the original spot they drained and cooked the hare, so why were they going to them?

A minute passed, the nearby bushes shook and four monsters appeared. Furthermore, there were two more hidden in the trees. The monsters looked like a panther with grey fur. With their grey-ish eyes, they were glaring directly at Kousuke.

Kousuke swung his sword in a threatening fashion. He was surrounded and it

made it difficult for him to move. He wanted to avoid fighting in this disadvantageous situation if possible. So far in their travels, the monsters that approached them would flee when he threatened them, but these panthers didn't budge at all.

「Then.. Victory for the first to strike! “Invisible strike, SHOCKWAVE“!」
(Kousuke)

He used one of his newest spells. With a wave of his hand, a shockwave shot forth. A few of the panthers were thrown back roughly, but the actual damage they took were light since the spell was casted in a wide manner.

The panthers began to move the moment the spell went off. Four of them pounced toward Kousuke simultaneously.

Kousuke used a nearby tree to shield him from the first two, dodged the third, and stabbed out his sword against the fourth. The sword stabbed into the shoulder, but when he pulled it out he noticed there wasn't any blood on the blade. He felt something was off but he put it off for now and focused on fighting.

While staying close to Lin, Kousuke continued his fight with the panthers. He knew these monsters were different from the others he encountered so far in the domain after defeating one. He split one in half and the corpse vanished without a trace.

He struck down another and confirmed that its body also disappeared.

The fight was quite one-sided. The panthers' attacks were easily read and dodged, but Kousuke would consistently land his slashes and kicks.

「Just what's going on exactly?」(Kousuke)

While he questions as to why these monsters were disappearing when killed, the last panther was cut down. Like the rest, this one disappeared into thin air as well.

The fight lasted around twenty minutes. The effective time of the barrier around Lin was thirty minutes so he had no time to relax.

Kousuke examined his surrounding once more before sheathing his sword.

The result of the fight, Kousuke was uninjured. It was thanks to the fact that Kousuke's mind was finally getting used to his physical abilities. If it was four month ago, the fight would have taken longer and he would have probably been hit a few times.

「Seriously though, just what in the world was that? Were they gatekeepers or something similar? Did they come out because we're close to the shrine?」
(Kousuke)

In reality, his guess was wrong, but he still concluded that he was probably on the right track. His doubts about this would be unraveled one day in the future in a dungeon when he idly chats with someone.

He dissolved the barrier around Lin, gathered his stuff and resumed his search. Kousuke's expectation of finding the shrine within that day was not met. They ended up finding it the following day past noon.

「It really is tiny huh...」(Kousuke)

The building in front of the two was smaller than half of a convenience shop. It was built with ivory bricks and seemed like it was constantly maintained. Both the building and its surrounding was beautiful.

Kousuke tried to sense for nearby presences, wondering if the shrine was empty or not. He suddenly felt a presence inside coming closer and the front door flung open.

「Welcome. I've been waiting for you」(???)

The one who appeared was a man a bit past twenty in age. He looked normal with nothing particularly special. Still though, his brown hair and dark blue eyes would make 6 out of 10 people consider him as pretty handsome.

His presence was overwhelming though, no human could compare. Was it his charisma? Even if he was placed into a crowd of a 1,000, anyone could point out his exact location, that's how overwhelming his presence was.

Kousuke wasn't able to open his mouth in this man's presence.

「Let's not talk standing around here, come inside. I'll at least prepare some tea」(???)

The man stated and disappeared into the shrine. Unlike the paralyzed Kousuke, Lin walked into the shrine with ease.

When the two disappeared, Kousuke finally snapped out of it and hurriedly entered the shrine.

The man and Lin were already seated, waiting for Kousuke. In the back of the room was a life-sized sculpture.

「Why were you just standing still outside earlier?」(???)

「Errr.. I couldn't move」(Kousuke)

「Couldn't move? Sorry, it's my fault for not suppressing my aura. Is it fine now?」(???)

The pressure that was emitting from the man vanished and put Kousuke at ease.

「Seems like you calmed down, good. Come, have a seat」(???)

He beckoned Kousuke and had him seated in front of the tea cup.

Once Kousuke began drinking the tea, the man started speaking.

「It's about your reason for coming here. The herb you need, you can gather it without worries. The herb "Italmik" grows in the nearby bushes of this shrine」
(???)

「Haa.... Wait a minute, how do you know the name of the herb?! I haven't even told Lin about it!」(Kousuke)

「I've been watching you see」(???)

「Watching me?」(Kousuke)

「Yup. Besides me, Mitalamu, Ruumana, and Seminruuz were also watching you」(???)

「Mitalamu? That sounds so familiar.....」(Kousuke)

Kousuke went into deep thought trying to remember. He suddenly recalled it was the name of a god that appeared on his identification card.

「A god's name? If that's the case then are you perhaps also a god?」(Kousuke)

『That can't be true, right?』Thought Kousuke. He thought gods wouldn't show themselves so easily like this.

「That's correct. I'm the one who governs pleasure and entertainment, Kohhawk」(Kohhawk)

Kohhawk ignored the fact that Kousuke was pointing his finger at him and nodded.

At his sudden announcement, Kousuke was confused whether he should be shocked, scream in fear, or bow in reverence. In the end he didn't do any of the three.

「I've heard gods were real, but seeing it myself is a bit...」(Kousuke)

「It's true, we normally don't show ourselves like this that often」(Kohhawk)

「..... Then why are you here? Did you have something to do here?」(Kousuke)

「I just wanted to see you in person at least once you see. Mitalamu and the others wanted to come too, but only one of us can appear here at a time. We played a game and the victor would be the one to come here and I was the one who won」(Kohhawk)

「I have no idea why the gods wanted to meet me though...」(Kousuke)

「Well, just consider it as us gods just killing some time. We really were just killing some time watching you. At first it was just Mitalamu watching you. Overtime, more began watching, but it dwindled down to seven if you include myself.」

It didn't seem like a lie that the gods were just killing time watching him. It seemed the gods' intention to use him was very small.

The reason why the number of gods watching him dwindled was because Kousuke wasn't doing anything flashy. "An invader from another world!" It was something the gods were truly intrigued with and were watching to see what he would do in this world. Unfortunately, Kousuke was doing things similar to the residents of this world so many of them lost interest.

〈A change in Title. Gods viewing pleasure since Mitalamu-sama is watching you〉

After Kohhawk informed Kousuke, in his head an announcement rung indicating a change with his titles.

Kousuke immediately took out his identification card and confirmed the changes. Just like the previous Title, it didn't provide any effects.

「If you were a bit more enthusiastic with your actions, I'm sure you would be able to see something interesting」(Kohhawk)

「Even if you tell me that.. I had my hands full getting myself used to being thrown into this unknown world you know」(Kousuke)

「Then I look forward to seeing it in the future. You've changed since your arrival to this world. Truly, I look forward to seeing how you grow」(Kohhawk)

「I changed?」(Kousuke)

「Try to remember. You hesitated and felt guilty when you first fought a monster. When you fought in the forest just now you showed nothing like that」(Kohhawk)

「That's... true」(Kousuke)

Kousuke is currently able to cut down monsters without an issue. No hesitation, no guilt, nothing like that would appear anymore. Having it pointed out, he became aware that he truly has changed. He felt a little depressed thinking that he's able to take lives easily now.

In this world, taking a life to survive was a given, but on Earth..... No in Japan, the value of life was completely different. Keeping that in mind, it could be said that Kousuke was getting familiar with this world's rules.

In this world, thinking that the lives of monster are precious is considered eccentric, not morally high.

If he could change his perspective, it would be much easier getting used to surviving in this world. It would also ease the burdens in his mind. But it was still too difficult for him. The time he spent on Earth was simply too long in comparison. It's impossible to change one's view in life in such a short amount of time.

Kohhawk knew intuitively what Kousuke was thinking about, but he kept his mouth shut. Including that, Kohhawk wanted to see just how Kousuke would change.

「.....Then keep watching. I doubt I'll live up to your expectations though」

(Kousuke)

「There's no way that'll happen. When you go back there will be a “happening” with Viare you know? Mitalamu said that so it's definitely true. I'm excited to see what you'll do to solve it」(Kohhawk)

They were words of a god who could occasionally see events in the future. The chances of it being wrong was very low.

「.....Was that some sort of revelation?」(Kousuke)

Ignoring Kousuke's question, Kohhawk stood up.

「I'm finished with my tasks so I guess I'll head back」(Kohhawk)

「Kohhawk-sama」(Lin)

Lin, who was quiet, suddenly spoke up.

「Ah yes, you did a good job」(Kohhawk)

「Thank you」(Lin)

「Good job? What do you mean?」(Kousuke)

「He's a temporary spirit I made to make things difficult for you. Since you made it here his job's done」(Kohhawk)

Kohhawk stated as he placed his hand on Lin's head.

Hearing that he's a spirit didn't surprise Kousuke much. He knew that Lin wasn't a normal child.

「I always felt that he was a bit unusual for a child, but a spirit? And what do you mean by making it difficult for me?」(Kousuke)

He always felt something was off since Lin would never get too tired despite the long travels and was too calm for his age.

He guessed that he was an adult from a small-statured race, but he would have never guessed that Lin was a spirit.

「You heard about the trial you must undergo before coming here right? While thinking about what kind of trial to give you, I decided to give you a useless companion to drag you down. Think about it, weren't you limited in your actions?」(Kohhawk)

「Certainly」(Kousuke)

Kousuke recalled the various troubles he had during his travel here and admitted that if he was alone it would have been easier.

「Well, despite his purpose, you weren't really troubled much in the end. I should have made it even harder for you. Even the monsters I sent after you in the forest were easily defeated」(Kohhawk)

「I didn't have much trouble, yes」(Kousuke)

Despite what he just said, Kousuke couldn't say the truth that he was, in fact, in a difficult spot before. The difficulty was when his food was stolen.

「Really? This was the first time I've seen someone care for their companion by singing and talking to them leisurely you know?」(Kohhawk)

Normally, travelers that entered the domain wouldn't have the stamina to keep singing all the way here. The monsters that appeared in the marshes and river, to Kousuke were weaklings, but to others they would be very dangerous. The panther monsters too would destroy a third rate adventurer. Even a first rate adventurer would have an arduous battle against six of them.

「Is that so. Enough about that then. You said Lin's job is done so what's going to happen to him now?」(Kousuke)

「He'll disappear. He was created just to be your travel companion in this domain」(Kohhawk)

「Disappear? You mean he'll die?!」(Kousuke)

「Well, that would be the case then」(Kohhawk)

「Lin, is that fine with you? Being created just to travel with me for a bit and dying because it's done is just....」(Kousuke)

「I was created just for that reason so disappearing after its done is normal you know?」(Lin)

It was an obvious thing for Lin himself. Conversely, he was confused why Kousuke would question it like this.

「I feel that it's a sad thing..... I know! Do you want to continue traveling with me? You were so excited just checking the river. There's a lot more to see outside of this domain」(Kousuke)

「I'm happy for the invitation, but my life will end in three days」(Lin)

Lin was satisfied since his job was done and announced his remaining lifespan.

To Kousuke, who didn't know about Lin's lifespan, felt that his invitation just now was nothing but arrogance birthed from ignorance.

He looked at Lin's face and concluded that he was just being selfish so he stopped.

「Lin, do you want to help Kousuke?」(Kohhawk)

「Help him?」(Lin)

At Kohhawk's abrupt question, Lin thought for a moment before nodding.

「He took care of me all throughout the trip and I truly appreciate that. I'm glad he also sang and kept me entertained as well」(Lin)

「Good. Then fuse yourself into Kousuke's jacket」(Kohhawk)

Kousuke and Kohhawk came to an agreeable suggestion.

For Kousuke, Lin will not have to die and the quality of his armor would increase.

For Kohhawk, he would gain a powerful subordinate for the future. Lin who fused into the jacket went into a deep sleep, slowly absorbing a tiny amount of Kousuke's power overtime. One day, he'll be able to reform his body and come out at will. The day he awakens, he will be a spirit wielding the power of a dragon.

He may have lost a subordinate for now, but the thought of having a spirit wielding a dragon's power in the future was interesting to him.

「What happens when he's fused with it?」(Kousuke)

「He'll temporarily lose his consciousness, but he'll retain his strength. The jacket will also be enhanced. This is perfect since I was thinking about what to give you before I go」(Kohhawk)

This farewell gift was suggested by Seminruuz. Seminruuz is the god that governs music. The songs Kousuke sang inside the domain were all from Japan. It was something Seminruuz never heard before. To show his appreciation to Kousuke for singing those songs, Seminruuz asked Kohhawk to suggest that as a farewell gift.

「Since he only temporarily loses his consciousness, does it mean he'll wake up one day?」(Kousuke)

「At the very least, it'll probably take around thirty years. Kousuke, hand me your jacket」(Kohhawk)

Kohhawk held the jacket in his left hand and his right hand was placed on top of Lin's head.

「See you later」(Lin)

Lin waved his farewell and vanished. The jacket also began to faintly shine at the same time.

「Here」(Kohhawk)

The jacket had a winged symbol embroidered with silver threads on the sleeves.

「Including the previous enhancements against slashing, piercing and fire, it's now more resilient against magic as well. And one more thing, imagine yourself becoming a bird」(Kohhawk)

Kousuke imagined as he was told and the jacket changed into a grey hawk with scarlet eyes.

The hawk stared at Kousuke and tilted its head. When Kousuke realized, he was able to see from his own eyes as well as through the hawk's eyes.

「That hawk will obey your every command. Also, whatever the hawk can see, so can you. The viewpoint is from the hawk's left eye」(Kohhawk)

The shared perspective was thanks to the fact that Kousuke and Lin were connected closely. This connection would allow the sleeping Lin to see everything through Kousuke and the hawk's eyes. Since Lin was just created and

ignorant of everything outside of the domain, he would be seeing many different things from now on.

「This is a one-of-a-kind magic equipment. Why not give it a name?」
(Kohhawk)

「...Linyo....」(Kousuke) 【TL: リンヨウ in the raw – “Rin’you”】

Kousuke gave the name after thinking about it for about three minutes.

If you change it into Kanji, “Hawk Neighbor” or “Neighboring Hawk”. Since Lin became a hawk and would always be with him, he gave him that name.

「With this, everything is settled. Oh, one last thing. The stolen bag is placed in the corner of the room alright. Good, I’m heading home now」(Kohhawk)

Before Kousuke could say anything, Kohhawk vanished. His presence was completely gone and Kousuke was left alone in the room.

The reason why the bag was here was because the “Trooper Eagles” were created by Kohhawk. The panther monsters were the same as well. This was the reason why the panthers wouldn’t bleed at all.

The monsters he met earlier in the domain were just coincidentally there in the marsh and river. The other monsters chose to hide themselves due to the difference in strength.

He petted the hawk once, gathered his bag and left the shrine. He gathered three “Italmiks” before flying out of the domain with the hawk in tow. The six day travel he did from the entrance to the shrine was cleared in just one day.

「To think that it would be this fast when I’m able to fly all the way. Magic is truly a convenient thing」(Kousuke)

Kousuke’s words to the hawk was met with a confused head tilt.

After camping for one night, he arrived back at Aterio a bit before noon the next day.

Alice immediately left for Hunsing after receiving the “Italmiks” from Kousuke.

Kousuke and Viare decided to see the martial tournament and got on the carriage heading north to Rezotikumog. Alice would meet with them later

there.

Five days after they left Aterio, the two finally reached the city of Rezotikumog that was brimming with people waiting to see the tournament.

Chapter 18: The secret story in a faraway place

Alice teleported twice and appeared in the ancient clan's capital, Vesamika, with the "Italmiks" Kousuke gave her. Compared to Aterio, the air felt a lot colder here. Vesamika resided in a cold region that's usually covered in snow for 2/3 of the year.

The kinds of people that made this their country were those trying to stop or slow down the process of aging through various means using this ideal location. It's possible to just use magic to produce similar results, but by using the synergistic effect of the environment and magic, it made it a lot easier to produce the same results.

There were three dukes that settled near this capital as their center and eventually sent out other nobilities like marquises, earls, viscounts and barons to expand their country's borders and produced more towns.

The ancient clan never expanded. The reason was because their population was small so one country would suffice.

The world's population is 4 billion and the ancient clan's country is 100 million out of that. As a country, it could be called large, but its small when compared to other nationalities.

Around half of the population have the blood of the ancient clan coursing through them, but only about 10,000 of them were pure-blooded enough to be able to become a part of the true clansmen through a ritual.

Furthermore, there's only one person where both of that person's parents are pure-blooded.

That person is this country's current king, the person Alice was about to meet.

The paperwork to see the king took two days to process, but Alice was finally able to enter the royal palace. She knew that it would take several days to process when she came back, but compared to the time when she came with Horun, it was processed faster. Even with an invitation, the two had to wait five days.

This was one of the ancient clan's characteristics, they take forever with these paperwork. If the extraneous processes were removed it would save a lot of time, but she neither had the intent nor a way to change something this clan views as normal. Even if she tried, the majority would reject it immediately.

「Witch Alicia-dono, enter」(???)

Five seconds after the guard in front of the audience room bellowed, Alice entered the room, right foot first, wearing clothes fit for someone who wields magic. She proceeded until she was five meters away from the throne and knelt. Alice made sure not to look at the king's face the entire time.

The five second wait and the right foot first was a formality expected of all who seek an audience with the king. In addition, one must wait ten seconds after the king states your name before you're allowed to look at his face.

These strict procedures and paperwork exist for a specific reason and is not pointless.

To state it simply, it's to tell if the person is an undead or not. The ancient clan shows that they are not undead with these bothersome rules. A long time ago, most people weren't able to determine the difference between the undead and the ancient clansmen. With them being constantly mistaken as undeads, the ancient clan came up with these rules to say "See, an undead can't do anything like this", thus these precise, arduous rules were born. They continued to practice these rules and are still around.

They originally did this out of frustration, but it eventually became the norm.

「Raise thy head」(???)

「Ha」(Alice) 【TL: "Ha" here is like "Understood" in a very.. VERY formal way】

Alice waited for ten seconds before raising her head. Their speech was not normal, but something fitting for this place.

Alice stared down the remaining five meters between her and the throne. The person sitting on the throne was a girl that looked around 12 or 13 with white hair and red eyes. This young lady is the one who stands over the 100 million ancient clansmen, Anastasia Rodea Vesamika Hunsing.

Her appearance is immature but Alice knew that this person was over a hundred years old.

As if to prove this point, her face seems cute and adorable, but the aura she emitted was not something a child would have. Unlike her innocent smile, the depths of her eyes showed confidence and something else that was unreadable.

Her voice is very pleasant and at the same time held a tone of aged wisdom that was tempered throughout the years.

Besides her were two ministers with high positions and the other officials were lined up from the door all the way to the throne on the edges of the velvet carpet.

「We are grateful for you for accepting and safely completing our request. Will you hand over the medical herbs in question」(Anastasia)

「Please accept these」(Alice)

Alice took out the three “Italmiks” from her clothes. The minister to the right accepted them and brought them before Anastasia.

Anastasia grasped the herbs and began to thoroughly examine them.

「So this is the “Italmik”. Appearance matches the documents. Indeed, I have received it. On another day thy reward, thee shall receive」(Anastasia)

「I thank you for your generosity」(Alice)

Alice bowed while staying on one knee.

「The one who retrieved these was thine disciple, was it not?」(Anastasia)

「Yes」(Alice)

Alice raised her head and looked straight at Anastasia before nodding.

「I wish to convey my gratitude personally」(Anastasia)

「Those words alone are more than enough for him. Once he receives the reward he will definitely be overjoyed」(Alice)

「To enter a domain and safely return after completing the task. My interest is piqued by such a person」(Anastasia)

Kousuke easily completed the task, but that was because his abilities made it too easy for him. In fact, most people would have failed and been thrown out of the domains. To be able to ensure a high chance of success, five top class adventurers are normally necessary. Unfortunately, among these top class adventurers, only a few have a Title related to a god.

「To be interested in someone like him is understandable. His travel companion increased by one, but still it was only a two-man team. He was able to complete the task with such a small group. You're aiming to draw such a person to your side, aren't you, your highness?」(Alice)

Alice left out the part that the “companion” was a child. It'll end up raising

Anastasia's valuation of Kousuke to a whole new level.

「Hiding it seems pointless. Yes, thou is correct. Having many capable individuals around is never an issue」(Anastasia)

「That person is not willing to enter the spotlight. It's best to give up on pulling him in」(Alice)

「Only if that is his will」(Anastasia)

Anastasia can see through Alice's attempt to protect Kousuke. Not because of any unshakeable proof, but through her intuition. She had faith that her intuition was correct.

If Kousuke wanted to promote himself then Alice wouldn't be trying to protect him. But from her interactions with Kousuke, it was obvious he had no such intent. Therefore, Alice must act this way.

「Of course it is his will. If he was looking to gain power and authority then wouldn't he have come here to have an audience with your highness?」(Alice)

「Hmm, this is true. If his purpose was as such, he would have aggressively rose and his name would be famous. Unfortunately, I have yet to hear any such rumor of someone successfully completing a domain's trial and returning unharmed」(Anastasia)

「I hope that you believe me now」(Alice)

「Mm」(Anastasia)

Though she nodded, Alice noticed a glint of doubt in Anastasia's eyes.

「If possible, relay to him that I wish to meet him」(Anastasia)

「I have received your command」(Alice)

And in reverse, Anastasia saw rejection reflecting in Alice's eyes. Anastasia nodded, keeping silent. She knew that Alice is covering for Kousuke so it's likely that message will not be given.

The two besides Anastasia also felt the sense of rejection from Alice. They won't scream out that it was rude since her highness agreed and nodded

already. They could only accept and obey. If a plot was necessary, the two would receive notice of it soon.

「Next is about Horun's case」(Anastasia)

「As long as your highness adheres to our previous agreement I have nothing more to say about it」(Alice)

「"Don't involve us in your problems next time", correct?」(Anastasia)

「Yes」(Alice)

The request Horun accepted was to treat a Dukedom's family head. The head was not bedridden due to assassination attempts, but his sudden collapse enabled the other nobilities to secretly plot.

Those nobles would view Horun as a problem and may direct assassins to kill her. Having a precious friend dragged into such a situation was something Alice would not tolerate. Thinking about what may happen, she wanted to make sure Horun was protected.

Those who despise being dragged into other's problems could just avoid the place. Unfortunately, Alice didn't have such luxury to choose that. Horun told Alice that she was going to stay here and it was possible that this place was

going to become Horun's second home.

Due of this, Alice was no longer able to avoid the problems that may arise. Therefore, as one of the reward, Alice wanted her highness to show commitment towards keeping Horun safe from harm.

「This is something I wish to confer. Unfortunately, not everything is under my control」(Anastasia)

There are no kings or queens capable of controlling all of their nobles. Even Alice understood this.

「.....I understand... But she's an important friend to me and I cannot stand around just praying for her safety」(Alice)

「I promise to protect her as much as I can. Duke Hughes's family shall do their utmost to protect her as well. To myself, Horun-dono's abilities and her charisma are truly attractive」(Anastasia)

「I hope your highness will not drag her into any more problems」(Alice)

「I understand. In exchange, do a small favor from myself, that should not be a problem for thee, correct? I wish for a message to be relayed to another country. The words of Horun-dono would surely be more effective since she helped many in the past. It's not an internal affair so the nobles here will be less tempted to try anything」(Anastasia)

「I'll believe your highness for now」(Alice)

「Our business is concluded. Thou may withdraw」(Anastasia)

「Ha」(Alice)

Alice stood up, bowed once and left the audience room.

「Minister of the Left」(Anastasia)

Without turning her head, Anastasia began speaking with one of the ministers.

「Ha」(Left Minister)

「Increase the security around Horun-dono」(Anastasia)

「I have received your command」(Left Minister)

The minister headed out of the audience room to begin his work.

「Minister of the Right」(Anastasia)

「Ha」(Right Minister)

「What are the chances of successfully gaining information on Alicia-dono's disciple?」(Anastasia)

「.....It will be difficult. That person has been gone from the scene for quite some time」(Right Minister)

「This is true. Still, stopping because it's difficult would be a waste. His intelligence cannot be ascertained yet, but his combat capabilities and judgments are like a diamond in the rough」(Anastasia) 【TL: The diamond part, she actually said "Origami-tsuki". Since you can fold origami into various shapes, it's a saying indicating that anything can be built with the proper

instructions】

「If you wish, I will do as much as possible gather the information」(Right Minister)

「Good. Perhaps this disciple of hers is in fact someone outrageous. Thou has noticed it too, did you not? Alicia-dono had two distinct scents coming from her」(Anastasia)

The scents caught by Anastasia was not body odor. To smell the inherent strength of another being is an ability the most pure-blooded ancient clansmen has.

This is one of this clan's biggest secret. Even Alice doesn't know about it. If she knew, she would have spent a day or two somewhere to get rid of Kousuke's scent.

「Yes, one scent belonged to someone who emits a distortion, the other scent.. I have no idea how to describe it」(Right Minister)

「That scent belongs to a dragon. It's the same scent of a dragon I encountered many years ago」(Anastasia)

「A dragon is it?」(Right Minister)

「It's possible that a Dragonslayer was born」(Anastasia)

The others nearby the two conversing started to become unsettled.

「Isn't that simply outlandish」(Right Minister)

「The dragon near Kalhode perished and a person powerful enough to enter and exit the domain freely appeared. It's possible the two are not related. Regardless of their relation, every country would scramble to draw in a Dragonslayer and the other person」(Anastasia)

「If a Dragonslayer exists then its fine, but even if it turns out to be false the existence of a powerful individual is equally good, am I correct to assume this?」
(Right Minister)

The Minister of the Right asked to confirm. To that, Anastasia nodded.

「Carry out this mission with the utmost secrecy! Alicia-dono must not find

out」(Anastasia)

The Minister of the Right bowed once and immediately left the audience room.

Anastasia put the Dragonslayer case into the corner of her mind and began thinking about the next visitors for the day. She decided to wait until the report arrives before speculating more.

Alice, who left the audience room, was heading towards the room Horun was staying in.

She knocked on the door and waited until she was told to come in before entering.

「Ah, welcome back Alice」(Horun)

She was most likely reading a book since she was holding a bookmarked book. The title of the book was “The Ancient Clan’s Culture”.

「I’m back」(Alice)

「Were you able to get the herbs?」(Horun)

「I just gave it to the queen. It’ll be passed over to you eventually」(Alice)

「With those I should be able to treat Balkius-sama」(Horun)

Being able to treat her patient soon, Horun was full of enthusiasm.

「By the way, where’s Vants? I thought he would be with you today」(Alice)

「Vants-san had something urgent come out and left」(Horun)

「That’s good then. His personality drives me crazy」(Alice)

「I think that he’s pretty fun to have around though」(Horun)

「Just how in the world are you two compatible... Let alone the two of you being in love」(Alice)

When Vants was brought up, Horun's cheeks were beginning to dye red. 『They must have gotten closer while I was gone』Alice thought seeing Horun's reaction.

So, Horun is in love with Vants. And Vants feels the same as well.

The occasion was when Horun met with Vants during their travel to Hunsing to give him thanks for assisting in solving the incident back at her home. Horun had a favorable impression of Vants's distinct personality.

Since then, the two would constantly converse with one another, deepening their relationship. During the journey, Vants protected Horun from a monster's attack and that pushed their relationship to the highest level.

When they arrived at Vesamika, Alice asked Horun "Why Vants" once. Alice felt that Kousuke and Horun would be together, in fact, she felt that Horun had some feelings for Kousuke.

Horun definitely does like Kousuke, but is not in love with him. During the time Horun and Kousuke stayed at Alice's home together, Horun's affection towards Kousuke became more like an older sister guiding the younger brother by the hand.

Horun and Kousuke becoming together would have likely happened if the two

were constantly together for about a year longer and if she never met Vants. That one year would have been enough time for Kousuke to become reliable and cause Horun's view of him to change. But this was only a "What if" situation. In the end, Horun met Vants, the man overflowing with confidence and reliability.

「Is Alice against me being with Vants?」(Horun)

「I'm not against it. I just don't understand what's so good about him. Simply put, I just don't understand, but I won't reject it」(Alice)

Alice did not want to destroy her best friend's happiness.

「That's a relief」(Horun)

On Horun's face floated a very happy smile.

「Be happy alright? I asked to make sure to keep you away from the clan's troubles, but just in case take care of yourself too」(Alice)

「Yes, I will」(Horun)

Horun herself understood how others viewed her and was prepared to get mixed up with the clan's troubles if she had to.

Horun was truly grateful for Alice who did this for her.

「Oh yeah. The queen and her people might come here asking about Kousuke. When that happens, try not to give too much information」(Alice)

「I know」(Horun)

Even if Alice was successful at silencing the information, Anastasia would not drop her interest in Kousuke.

Since Alice knew Anastasia wouldn't give up, she already planned out how to use the 30 flash-coins for the completion of the request. Alice is not using them for herself, but for Kousuke's sake instead.

She planned on using the reward to create a hideout. She wanted to make sure there was a place where he could hide and rest in peace in case Kousuke's identity becomes revealed and is chased by others.

Using 25 of the flash-coins plus a few of the dragon scales it was possible to set up a great hideout for Kousuke.

She also planned to change her home to that place as well. Since Horun would no longer be in Ricardo, Alice's current home was quite pointless to keep. Quite a few people knew that she resided there as well so the constant visitors she was getting were becoming bothersome. The relocation of her home would be a windfall for her.

Alice stayed for seven days before heading to Rezotikumog.

During those seven days she confirmed Horun's safety by applying magic to her room, got invited to balls by the queen, gave lectures about magic, and finished various bits and pieces of errands.

She headed back to Ricardo for one of the errands to make some preparations to set up the hideout, but she soon realized she should have immediately met up with Kousuke due to the incident he encountered.

Before Anastasia found out about the whereabouts of the Dragonslayer, in another place was a group of people discussing about a Dragonslayer.

Those people were Kohhawk and the other gods.

When Kohhawk left the domain, he was immediately welcomed back by the “Dragonslayer Watchers”.

「I met with the Dragonslayer」(Kohhawk)

「Were you able to investigate?」(???)

The gentle-looking, blonde haired asked and Kohhawk nodded. This god governs learning and academics.

「I figured out why his ability turned out that way. It was exactly as Mitalamu stated before」(Kohhawk)

To his reply, the five men and women around him nodded thinking “I guess these things happen too”. It was not because they didn’t believe in Mitalamu’s words, but they were praying that it would be wrong.

The one with the long, dark purple haired showed no reaction, this goddess was Mitalamu, the goddess who saw a glimpse of Kousuke’s future. There was no reason for her to be surprised by Kohhawk’s report.

Kohhawk didn’t completely lie to Kousuke about killing some time, but his other purpose for meeting him was to investigate him.

And it was not because Kousuke’s a Dragonslayer. He was investigated because of the incredible Gift he had. It was possible that Kohhawk could have destroyed Kousuke there depending on the results.

「The gift of “All Attributes Up”.. This is the first time I’ve ever seen it」(???)

The goddess with a guitar in her hand and long sky blue hair said in

amazement. This goddess is the one who thanked Kousuke for his songs, Seminruuz.

「Seriously...」(???)

The bald god with a stout build nodded. This was Doriz, who governs blacksmithing.

If it was just the abilities indicated on Kousuke's identification card then it wouldn't have been an issue. Among the Gifts, most people would usually have one that would raise a particular attribute. But a Gift that would allow someone to raise all of their attributes.. This was unheard of and they were troubled by this. The fact that it doesn't appear on the card was truly troubling for them. Furthermore, his abilities completely passed the thresholds of a normal human being. Depending on how much he grows, it was possible he would gain the power to slay a god. Even now his power was growing.

Currently, there's no change in his card despite his overwhelming strength. If the card were to have a detailed parameter of his abilities then everyone would instantly notice he's beyond human abilities. His ability to learn being a few times better than most would only be considered a cheat by everyone else.

Even though he's someone that can become a Godslayer, Kousuke's interest in the gods was lessened by Kohhawk and co's plan. Against a potential Godslayer, rather than feeling endangered, there were gods among them that

wanted to see how things would play out for entertainment. The first that was interested was the God of War. Kohhawk was actually against forcefully speeding up Kousuke's growth. It was partly because he didn't want to die, but it was mostly because he didn't want to see the world the World's God gave them endangered, or worse, destroyed.

The goddess who saw a glimpse of the future, Mitalamu, was also against Kousuke's forceful growth.

The only difference about her was that she didn't want anyone to assist or hinder Kousuke. As for him becoming a Godslayer, it didn't interest her at all. As long as the World's God and the four highest gods are around, gods like her could be replaced without any problem.

Mitalamu just enjoyed watching people live their lives freely. Those who live freely would occasionally have a different fate from what she saw in the future. Seeing them in unexpected situations or producing different results, this was something she truly enjoyed watching in this world. To better enjoy those people's course of actions, Mitalamu tried her best to not peek into their future.

This is why Mitalamu wanted everyone else to not lay their hands on Kousuke. It might seem unusual for her to be around the gods that wanted to investigate Kousuke thoroughly, but it was better than the other gods since Kohhawk and co. decided to keep their contact with Kousuke minimal.

Kohhawk was just investigating Kousuke's personality and why such a gift manifested in him.

He checked Kousuke's personality to be able to better ascertain his future actions. If his personality was too adventurous or warmongering, then his growth would have been fast, quickly becoming similar to a god.

These gods were thankful that Kousuke's personality was more timid so for now they're just cautious.

The reason for such an outrageous gift manifesting in Kousuke was related to his birth world.

The difference between the people here and his world wasn't big. Anatomically they're the same and both have souls residing in them. There were two major differences though. Being born in a world with or without magic and how they evolved into humans.

The presence or absence of mana was not the cause. The reason for their difference lied in the fact that in Kousuke's world, people evolved into humans differently.

The humans of Earth evolved without any interferences from the gods, relying solely on their own adaptability, environments, and an enormous amount of time. The humans in this world also evolved into human beings, but their evolution was mostly a strengthening of their body and resilience toward diseases, not their mind.

Earth's human beings evolutionary adaptability was incredibly complex and different from this world's. That evolutionary adaptability affected the abilities given to Kousuke when he killed the dragon.

If Kousuke was simply transported to this world then there would have been no problems. It was because he became strong and evolved unbelievable abilities.

「In a way, I pity that child」(???)

The one pitying Kousuke was the calm, long silver-haired goddess. She's the goddess of medicine, Reilile.

「That's true. He came to this world by accident and coincidentally became strong, making us monitor him」(Kohhawk)

「He's Horun's savior so I don't want to see him treated roughly」(Reilile)

Reilile felt an obligation to help Kousuke for Horun's sake.

The gods of this world were not allowed to interfere with this world's management outside of what they governed. With respect to Horun becoming a sacrifice, this too, Reilile could not interfere with.

This time, Kohhawk's contact with Kousuke was an emergency measure. The high gods even gave their permission.

「It's necessary to prevent the possibility that he destroys this world with his hands」(Kohhawk)

At Kohhawk's words, Reilile nodded.

「We should pay attention to the humans' actions now too. I hope none of them provokes the Dragonslayer too much」(Kohhawk)

Currently, there's only one place that knows about the Dragonslayer's existence. That place, through the "Clairvoyance" Gift, already foretold about it.

They didn't know the exact time nor who would become a Dragonslayer though. They were only able to scry for a rough timing and that the person will be a human male.

The descendants of those prophets dispatched people who can use magic to sense dragons and are currently searching for Kousuke.

These descendants wanted to encourage the Dragonslayer's growth, but from the gods' perspective, these descendants obviously did not know that he could enter the realm of gods. It becomes known just how much they misread this when they see the growth rate of the Dragonslayer.

「That place has a screwed up legend floating around」(Doriz)

「That tribe did almost perish before」(Kohhawk)

「Are there any other place we should be wary about?」(Reilile)

「Three」(Mitalamu)

Mitalamu stated concisely.

「First would the guild. That place assumes that the Dragonslayer is just an above average adventurer. The next one is the noble that received a report from a spy. The report stated that someone interesting as arrived. He brought the idea of “Ride Hero” out into the open so it’s expected」(Mitalamu)

「Then what’s the last one?」(Kohhawk)

The last information was something the others gods didn’t know, all of their gazes gathered on Mitalamu.

「The queen of the ancient clan will hypothesize the possible existence of a Dragonslayer」(Mitalamu)

Mitalamu disclosed the future she foresaw without the slightest change in her tone for the most part. Her tone became slightly happy when she said the word “Dragonslayer”.

Her having an indifferent tone was normal so the others didn’t mind much. The only time Mitalamu shows her emotions is when she’s watching the people who are truly free.

「The ancient clan huh..... Should we put in a light interference just in case?」
(Kohhawk)

「Wouldn't that violate the commandment?」(Reilile)

「.....That's probably true」(Kohhawk)

They discussed, but decided to leave the clan alone.

「Are there any other problems?」(Doriz)

「It's not a problem, but something that's been giving me worries. The fact that he's been storing more and more power unconsciously. I fiddled with the spirit to drain some of that power for its growth though」(Kohhawk)

「Since he's not using any power, him storing it instead makes sense. If he does release a lot of his power, it would probably be during a fight. There shouldn't be an issue if that happens」(Doriz)

These gods wanted Kousuke to use up the power stored inside him. If it becomes too large, the consequences might be dire.

They're hoping for a situation where Kousuke would unleash a lot of that stored power.

「As long as he stays in calm places there shouldn't be any issue」(Kohhawk)

At Kohhawk's statement, the rest nodded.

Currently, Kousuke has yet to learn the harshness of this world. Even though he almost lost his life coming to this world. The true cruelty of the world, is in fact, that people can die for unfair reasons. Most of the people he's met so far have been kindhearted, but he has yet to meet the truly devious, cunning and evil individuals of this world.

For someone who came to an unknown place alone, he has been blessed with exceptional luck so far.

The gods were unable to come up with a solid plan with their current discussion. In the end, the gods decided to continue what they were doing and monitor Kousuke. It would double as a time killer for them, but their true

feelings about this was that they wished they could have just observed him purely for entertainment.

Of course, Mitalamu was enjoying watching him though.

Chapter 19: No Funds, The Art of Money Making

「The martial tournament is going to be held here right?」(Viare)

「There are quite a few people that look like contestants around so I'm sure that's the case」(Kousuke)

Kousuke and Viare were chatting as they walked around in the town, in search of a suitable inn. Just as Kousuke stated, there were numerous individuals around them that looked like contestants.

He looked around to see if he might catch Borudosu, but there were too many people around so he gave up. In fact, Borudosu hasn't even arrived yet so there's no way Kousuke would see him.

「Kousuke-san, are you going to participate?」(Viare)

「Do you think I will?」(Kousuke)

Viare thought back about everything that happened so far.

「You won't then」(Viare)

「Exactly!」(Kousuke)

The two declared.

「I just reached the point to be able to fight monsters without feeling too bad. Fighting a human.. That's something I doubt I can do at the moment. I don't want to accidentally kill the other person」(Kousuke)

He's recalling how he caused Borudosu's critical condition. Borudosu's sturdy nature prevented his death, but against the adventurers and martial artists around Kousuke, he would most likely end up killing them with the same strike. Even with the changes in his perspective about killing, he still viewed murder as taboo.

This could be solved with him holding back, but he's not sure how to hold back so not participating was the best way to avoid killing people.

「I doubt you would end up killing them though...」(Viare)

「Not sure about that, I'm still unaccustomed to this power so its possible」
(Kousuke)

「I know you're powerful, but just how powerful you are.. I haven't the faintest idea」(Viare)

Viare was never around when Kousuke did requests that required combat so it's expected that she doesn't know.

Since she'll just be a nuisance in trying to get the unenthusiastic Kousuke to participate, Viare dropped the topic.

The two leisurely walked around, buying souvenirs and snacks from stalls, much like a tourist.

Other than the souvenirs and snacks, many of the stalls were influenced by the tournament and had many combat-oriented items for sale as well. Arms, repairs, ointments and salves, services and items like these were everywhere causing numerous adventurers to stop and peruse.

Kousuke was slightly interested too and would stop a few times here and there. He's looking around at the various swords in the stalls, thinking about buying one to replace his current sword.

「Ah, this might be good」(Kousuke)

After looking around at so many stalls, his eyes glued onto one item and greed reflected in his eyes.

And it wasn't a sword.

「Did you find something good?」(Viare)

「Yup. I think it's a throwing knife」(Kousuke)

Kousuke proceeded towards a nearby stall.

His interest in the throwing knives sprouted due to his fight with the Trooper Eagles. Magic was too slow so he wanted an alternative on hand. Still, even if he had throwing knives then, it wasn't a guarantee that he would have intercepted them successfully. Even Kousuke understood this. He just wanted to have as many means to attack as possible for all situations.

「Welcome!」(Stall owner)

「Those are throwing knives right?」(Kousuke)

「That's correct! Would you like to hold them?」(Stall owner)

The stall owner handed a single throwing knife to Kousuke.

Length of 15cm, double-edged, thin and about 2cm wide. It was crafted with combat in mind so it looked difficult to use for anything else.

It was lighter than a carrot too. To make effective use of these, it would be necessary to aim at vital points.

「Could you tell me the quality of this knife? Also, how much can I rough these up?」(Kousuke)

「Aren't these kind of things meant to be roughed up?」(Stall owner)

「Oh, yea that's right」(Kousuke)

「Well, let's see.. I guess you can use them around five times with small maintenance after every use before they become very dull. These kind of things deteriorate after every use. It'll break faster if you hit hard objects too. As for the quality of the craft, I guess it's about normal」(Stall owner)

「Hmmm... Can I get six of these?」(Kousuke)

「You bet! Do you have a holster for those? If you don't I'll sell you one at a discount」(Stall owner)

「I'll take that too」(Kousuke)

「There's one that attaches to the belt, another which attaches to a jacket pocket, and the last one is attached to your arm. Which one would you like?」
(Stall owner)

「I'll take the one for the belt」(Kousuke)

Since he's going to get used to them eventually, it didn't matter which one he chose. The belt attachment was chosen because it seemed the easiest to get used to.

「You bet! The total is four silver coins」(Stall owner)

「That's unexpectedly cheap」(Kousuke)

「That's around the market price ya'kno?」(Stall owner)

「I feel that it's a bit expensive though」(Viare)

The current Kousuke was still unfamiliar with the value of money in this world. It was because he's holding quite a bit of gold coins. In terms of silver coins alone, he had 200 of them. Since he was taking out only four from that wealth, it felt cheap to him.

Kousuke accepted the throwing knives and the holster that could carry ten knives and attached it to his belt. 『I'll practice in the inn's backyard later』 Thought Kousuke as he left the stall.

They became a bit hungry so they bought a popsicle before resuming their inn search. The two were crunching down on the popsicle as they walked. By the way, Kousuke got the apple flavor and Viare got orange. Of course Kousuke paid since the two would be moving around together, he decided he'll manage all

the funds.

In fact, the real reason was because Viare's clumsy and she might lose the wallet if she was in charge. Even if the person in question was aware, she couldn't instantly change so leaving it to Kousuke was for the best.

As the two continued, Kousuke would, on occasion, move his arms abnormally. Viare asked him if something was wrong, but after being told the reason she calmed down.

And so, his arms continued the weird movements.

「Again?」(Viare)

「Yup, again. We look like tourists with our amazed faces so they're assuming we're country bumpkins with too much time」(Kousuke)

「It's a good thing Kousuke-san's in charge of the funds」(Viare)

Kousuke was repelling the numerous pickpockets' hands from entering his pockets. Maybe because Kousuke looked like an easy target, four more pickpockets came towards him. Those four, at the very least were left with bruised arms or with a fractured arm in the end.

Seeing the consequences the four pickpockets received, the rest of the pickpockets targeting Kousuke left.

「Their gazes are gone」(Kousuke)

「They were looking at us for that long?」(Viare)

「Yup. It was a faint feeling though since there are so many people around us. I wonder if this city's security is just poor....」(Kousuke)

「Hmm.... It should be on the better side I think? This city's bigger than St. Beria and even over there disturbances occur」(Viare)

Kousuke's standard for public order is Japan so his evaluation of Rezotikumog's security was low.

While they talked about that, the two were about to enter an alleyway and a man, in a hurry, ran into Viare.

As Kousuke caught Viare before she fell and he suddenly heard something break.

「Viare, are you alright?」(Kousuke)

「I'm fine but whatever that person was holding seems to have broken」(Viare)

「You don't have to worry about it Viare. Most people would end up bumping into each other if one of them suddenly pops out」(Kousuke)

The man in the early thirties stared at the box before suddenly trying to grab Viare.

「Dangerous」(Kousuke)

「KIYAAA!?!」(Viare)

Being suddenly moved, Viare let out a small scream. Kousuke had carried Viare away to dodge the man's sudden lunge.

「COMPENSATE!! COMPENSATE ME!」(???)

The man's face was red as he bellowed at the two.

「Even if you tell us to compensate you, you were also in the wrong. Watch where you're going next time」(Kousuke)

「THAT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING!! COMPENSATE ME NOW!」(???)

「Doesn't mean anything? You...」(Kousuke)

The man's screaming attracted a crowd of people. Hearing the uproar, a few nearby soldiers came.

「What happened?」(Soldier)

「Those bastards bumped into me and broke my stuff! AND THEY REFUSED TO COMPENSATE ME!!」(???)

Before Kousuke and Viare could say anything, the man threw his one-sided argument towards the guard to make Kousuke and Viare look like the villains. The soldiers were taken aback at the aggression coming out of the man.

「Is.. is that what happened you two?」(Soldier)

「No. It's true that we bumped into each other, but that was an accident. Just exactly how could someone tell that a person was dashing around the corner of a building and avoid them in time? There should be some witnesses to prove that we're innocent」(Kousuke)

Hearing Kousuke's disappointed words, the soldiers nodded and began questioning the crowd. During that entire time the man was still screaming "COMPENSATE ME". He was being too desperate, both the crowd and Kousuke were a bit confused by him.

Kousuke thought he was a scammer, but seeing his behavior, he began to doubt that possibility. Having considered that, he still didn't feel like compensating this man.

It hasn't been long since the incident so the soldiers gathered the testimonies

quickly.

They concluded that this entire case was an accident.

「It doesn't seem like neither side was wrong. Just an accident. There doesn't seem to be any need to compensate, but.....」(Soldier)

The conclusion felt bad. That man was still screaming.

「Was whatever that broke that expensive?」(Kousuke)

「Maybe it was something very precious to him?」(Viare)

At Viare's words, the soldier assumed the same and nodded.

「If that is the case then maybe a little compensation might be needed. For

now, let's call an appraiser to find out. You guys, wait here for me alright?」
(Soldier)

The two nodded and the soldier left to get an appraiser.

The man was no longer screaming, but he was mumbling under his breath. He really didn't seem normal in the head right now.

Fifteen minutes later, the soldier brought back a middle-aged appraiser.

「Please excuse me for a moment」(Appraiser)

The appraiser gave notice and opened the box to begin examining the contents. The contents of the box were three sets of teacups. Nothing in the box was intact and pale red debris was scattered inside.

「How is it? Was it valuable?」(Soldier)

Since the appraiser seemed finish, the soldier questioned him.

「Let me see... It's definitely not cheap. The maker of the box's content was Gran Misha, a famous craftsmen from a hundred years ago. It was one of his earlier works, there's no doubt about it. It was well preserved so it would have sold for quite a bit if it wasn't broken」(Appraiser)

「Just how much would it have been?」(Soldier)

「If I wanted to buy it then I would pay around twenty silver coins. Others might be willing to pay up to twenty-five silver coins」(Appraiser)

「For teacups, that's quite the price」(Soldier)

The soldier nodded as he understood why the man was being so noisy.

At the same time, the man started to scream again, rejecting the appraisal results.

「THAT'S A LIE! IT'S WORTH MORE!」(???)

「A lie? I hope you know that I'm a professional who's been doing this for over twenty years」(Appraiser)

「This was something my father paid three gold coins for! My father told me it was one of Gran Misha's "Trump Series"!」(???)

「Ahahaha」(Appraiser)

The appraiser began laughing at the man's claim.

「This? A part of the "Trump Series"? Don't spout such rubbish. Yes, those looked like they were a part of the "Trump Series". However, they only look like one, there's a distinct difference between yours and the real ones. In the "Trump Series", on the bottom of each teacup will have a faint Club, Heart, Spade, or Diamond emblem」(Appraiser)

「Those had that too!」(???)

「The ones on yours, they can be removed, yes? The real ones have it drawn into the bottom so it doesn't fade. Those are most likely the predecessors of the "Trump Series". There are many of those sets around and their value is pretty low. I have ten sets like yours in my store and one real one as well. It's impossible for someone like me who's seen the real thing to be wrong,

correct?」(Appraiser)

「Th.. That's...」(???)

The man was in shock at the results and plopped down onto the floor.

「I'll be taking my leave then」(Appraiser)

「Thank you for your assistance」(Soldier)

After the soldiers gave a bow, the appraiser returned back to his own store.

「I'll be returning to my patrol route. The three of you can decide what to do from this point on. If you do plan to compensate, it should be alright as long as you pay half the value」(Soldier)

「Thank you for taking care of us」(Viare)

Viare lowered her head deeply and Kousuke gave a slight bow.

The soldier left and the crowd dispersed since the incident was solved.

「Then, ten silver coins」(Kousuke)

Seeing how depressed the man was, Kousuke, who originally didn't want to compensate, took out ten silver coins and gripped them into the man's hand.

Ten silver coins wasn't too much so Kousuke didn't mind giving it out.

Seeing the silver coins in his hand, the man look like he was about to cry.

「It's just not enough with this!」(???)

Kousuke felt irritated hearing that since he didn't have to compensate him at

all.

「Just how greedy are you! I won't give you a single extra coin more alright! Let's go, Viare」(Kousuke)

「Wait a moment」(Viare)

Despite Kousuke's rude tone in trying to get them away from the man, Viare stopped Kousuke.

「Is it possible that you're in dire need of money due to a certain circumstance?」(Viare)

Viare thought this might be the case since the man gave off a familiar feeling. It's a lot better now, but in the past she had a difficult time managing the orphanage's finance with Wei and their situation would fluctuate constantly due to unplanned expenditures. The times when she and the residents had to go out to borrow money, they had the exact same atmosphere around them like the man in front of her. Therefore, she concluded that there must be a reason for what he's doing.

Even if she heard his situation, it was unlikely that she would be able to produce the necessary funds for him. In the first place, Viare had no money. However, even if it's just a bit, she wanted to help this man.

「I understand that it may not be something you would tell a stranger like myself, but I may be able to help you a little, you know?」(Viare)

Maybe he noticed that Viare spoke without ulterior motives, but regardless, he began explaining everything.

「... My kid went missing five days ago. Two days later, I got a ransom notice that if I ever want to see my kid again I need to pay up 10 flash coins. The deadline is in two more days... I ran all over the place to gather the money, even took loans. I barely managed to get 5 flash coins so far. I was hoping to get more by selling the rest of my possessions off」(???)

「So that's why you were so desperate」(Kousuke)

His child's life was in danger, Kousuke erased his indignation towards the man

as he understood his feelings.

「You didn't report this to the soldiers or to the guild yet?」(Kousuke)

「I reported, of course I reported! But they would say they're too busy and couldn't bother with me!」(???)

「The soldiers aside... the guild not providing assistance is a bit...」(Viare)

Viare has a deep understanding of a guild's management from her work. Viare was tilting her head and Kousuke was wondering if she could recall anything that might help. Kousuke didn't open his mouth because he didn't want to make the man even more anxious.

「Normally, the guild would accept criminal investigations like murder and abduction...」(Viare)

「The tournament's about to start so that might be the cause of this?」
(Kousuke)

「Even if they're busy, it doesn't answer why they would reject the request.

Hey, Kousuke-san, would you please lend us your strength?」(Viare)

『It came』Muttered Kousuke in his mind. He knew Viare would propose this to him. And she knew that Kousuke wouldn't refuse since he's definitely worried about the child. Still though, he didn't want to actively run around helping people.

When Viare asked him to save the children from the orphanage, he mobilized immediately. Right now, he responded a bit slowly. It was due to the difference of familiarity. He knew Viare well, but he doesn't even know this man's name. Kousuke may not be inhumane, but he's not a saint either. He'll ignore people in trouble sometimes since he doesn't know them.

If Viare didn't suggest helping the man then it would have been fine as well, but a child's life was involved so the chances of Viare not wanting to help was close to zero.

「Even if you ask me to help.. My entire funds wouldn't be able to help him reach the 10 flash coins. And giving out our money, how are we going to travel after that?」(Kousuke)

「Th...Then! Complete requests at the guild! If it's Kousuke-san then...」(Viare)

「Viare, you should know from the beginning that I won't be able to take those high reward requests right now」(Kousuke)

With Kousuke's abilities, most requests would be a cinch for him, but his current contributions to the guild is too low so his ranking wasn't high enough. Even if he tried to take the request, they would stop him. There's two day left until the deadline and it was pretty obvious that even if the request was issued, it wouldn't be finished in time.

「Let's see, what else can we do.... can you think of anything else uncle?」
(Viare)

He stared wide-eyed at the two in front of him who suddenly declared they would help.

「Why are you helping me? We just met and I ever troubled you two...」(???)

「That's true, but hearing that your child is in trouble... I'm not inhumane so I can't ignore this」(Kousuke)

Kousuke didn't want to get entangled in this a bit, but he wouldn't feel too comfortable if he ignored it.

「Thank you. Those words are more than enough. Sorry for giving you trouble earlier. I'll try to manage this by myself. Truly, thank you very much」(???)

After the man said that and stood up, Viare showed a disappointed smile.

Seeing that, Kousuke sighed and stopped the man. As a man, he wanted to look reliable and cool in front of a cute girl.

「Uncle. Two heads are better than one, three heads are better than two. If we work together, we'll be able to figure something out. So let's think of a way to either gather the money or directly save the child, alright?」(Kousuke)

Viare's face brightened hearing Kousuke's words.

「Bu.. But I don't want to impose」(???)

「We're forcefully giving you our strength so don't worry about it. Besides, even if we help, it's not guaranteed we'll be successful」(Kousuke)

The man's eye began to mist and he deeply lowered his head.

He announced his name, Douglas, and began leading the two to the store he managed. That store was borrowed so he couldn't sell it. If he could sell the store then he would have been able to gather 10 flash coins.

He placed a "On Break" sign on the front door of the store before leading the two inside. The interior was part store, part residence, so the amount of products placed on the shelves were small. Kousuke glanced at the small household goods placed on the shelves while being led to the back of the store. The two were brought into a living room and sat on the sofa while watching Douglas prepare very expensive tea for them.

「Please」(Douglas)

After that one word, Kousuke immediately cut to the chase.

「I just want to ask again, do you know of any way to gather a lot of money quickly?」(Kousuke)

「No, if I knew I would have already tested it. I don't like this idea, but gambling could work though」(Douglas)

「Isn't gambling a bad idea when you're already desperate?」(Viare)

「Yes, that's why I will only gamble as a last resort」(Douglas)

The three were unable to think up of anything else besides gambling to quickly get money.

The most reliable way to “gamble” was to have someone enter and win the tournament through the test of strength. By simply betting on that person, one could attain massive wealth. The test would normally be impossible for any new adventurers, but Kousuke would be able to pass with flying colors. Therefore, the three could earn a lot by making Kousuke enter and bet on him to win.

For Kousuke and Viare, neither of them knew that the tournament had a gamble system. Douglas knew about this though. However, he doesn't believe Kousuke would be able to enter so he excluded that idea from the discussion.

「So excluding gambling, were there some things that you were unable to do alone that might be possible with the three of us?」(Kousuke)

「Even if you ask me...」(Douglas)

He tilted his head and thought back since he couldn't suddenly remember them.

「For the time being, just say whatever pops up in your head that might allow us to earn money quickly. It's possible that there are some things among them that we'll be able to do」(Kousuke)

「Something that can be done quickly..... Become the martial tournament's champion? No.. the deadline already passed... Gamble? No, no, this is our last resort... Dig for precious ores in the nearby caves? Ah what am I saying, I won't find them in time. How about if the two of you get loans using your name? Gah.. no, I can't trouble you further like that. Maybe we can develop a new product and sell the idea...? If I could do that easily then I wouldn't be suffering....」(Douglas)

Douglas was mumbling out all his ideas.

Among those ideas, Kousuke reacted to the “New product” one. He thought he might be able to sell products that exists on Earth over here. He began thinking of plausible products.

The first thing that he thought up of was a car. It’s faster than a carriage, a bus could transport a lot of people and a truck could deliver a lot of items back and forth. REJECTED! He doesn’t know how to build one, much less know what they’re made out of. Much of the car, he thought, was imitable using magic, but they wouldn’t produce immediate profit.

Next up, the bicycle. This one seemed more profitable than the car. He knew the various parts required to build one, but despite it being easier to create, he won’t meet the deadline.

Kousuke stopped with the complex products and began thinking for simpler ones.

Stories like “Ride Hero” had high value in this world so he asked Viare and Douglas about selling stories.

「Selling stories, I see. It’ll depend on the story’s content, but this might work. However.. There’s one problem」(Douglas)

Kousuke and Viare didn’t know about this point so they encouraged Douglas for the answer.

「How to sell it. I don't have the connections for this either. How about you two?」(Douglas)

「Connections? We recently came to this city so there's no one. I could sell it directly without connections like that, right? Are there any publishers nearby?」
(Kousuke)

Kousuke's method to sell the story is not aligned with Douglas's.

Kousuke wanted to sell the ideas directly to the publishers to get an advance payment.

Douglas on the other hand thought to transfer the story's right over to another and earn royalties.

Douglas's method was more correct since he's a resident of this world.

Because.. This world doesn't have publishers. Books are monitored and issued on a larger scale by an organization, appointed by the country. That organization is like a publisher, but they're not waiting for writers to appear. Paper is expensive, so writers are on the scarcer side. If it was cheaper than private publishers may appear.

Most would write and make the book themselves, sell it to a bookstore and wait for the book's reputation to rise or fall by word of mouth. It's possible to earn royalties from troupes that perform your story as well.

If the story's reputation becomes famous, the organization may reach out to you to produce copies of your story. By accepting the invitation, one would receive an enormous amount of money for the next few years as a deposit for the idea. Anyone who's already been invited may visit the organization with a new story at any time.

If Kousuke wanted to sell his story, he needs to find a buyer right away. Finding a buyer immediately was nearly impossible and even if they do find one, the negotiation would take too much time.

Kousuke recognized that this world and Earth was different when he was told that a publisher doesn't exist so he rejected the idea of selling stories. While thinking of another idea he thought selling recipes might work.

He compared what he's eaten in this world so far to what he's eaten in his world.

The two ideas he came up with were ice cream and hamburger.

However, when he recalled the ingredients for ice cream, he could only recall the rough ideas of how it's made so he also rejected this.

On the other hand, the recipe for hamburgers was simple. You can eat it using

your hands and it was popular on Earth so he thought this would work.

「I have a recipe idea called “Hamburger”」(Kousuke)

「Hamburger.... I’ve never heard of it before. It sounds like “Hanbagu” so are they similar?」(Douglas) 【TL: For those confused Hanbagu and Hamburger】

「It’s a flattened “Hanbagu” with chopped onion, pickles, lettuce, cheese and ketchup sandwiched between two pieces of breads. You can eat it using your hands」(Kousuke)

「Hohou, so “Hanbagu” sandwich. It’s so simple! To think no one thought up of something like this before. A creative way of thinking I see」(Douglas)

「Do you think this will work?」(Kousuke)

「A friend of mine is a cook so it’s possible to sell the idea. It should sell well for the first few days since it’s a new idea, but it’s too easy to make. Others will start to copy the idea quickly so the profit will gradually fall. Keeping that in mind, we need to consider how much we can actually make from selling this idea too.....」(Douglas)

Douglas began mumbling to himself as he calculated how much he could sell it for.

In about five minutes he finished. The selling price Douglas proposed was less than a flash coin. The selling price was bottlenecked by the simplicity of the recipe. If the recipe was something more complex like ice cream, pudding, or spaghetti then the selling price could have risen easily to about 2-3 flash coins and earn a percentage of the sales.

「I should have learned a bit more about cooking... Still, it's no good if it's complicated and also no good when it's simple... What should I do now? Can they not copyright the method so that others can't imitate them?」(Kousuke)

「There's nothing convenient like that around here you know?」(Viare)

Viare answered with an amazed face.

However, Douglas's face showed that he wanted to say something he recalled, but it immediately became dejected.

「Douglas-san, do you have an idea?」(Viare)

「I do, but I don't think its plausible」(Douglas)

「Well, no worries, just say it. Hearing your idea might help us come up with a better one」(Kousuke)

「Have you heard that the God of Entertainment and Pleasure is always searching for new ways to play?」(Douglas)

Kousuke shook his head while Viare nodded.

「The person who delivers it will receive 10 flash coins. Even more, for that person, 5% of the profits earned from that idea will go to him or her. This is something like a rule from a long time ago. Unfortunately, nothing new has been presented to the god for a while. The last time the god accepted an idea was 30 years ago. The previous one before that was 70 years ago. I gave up because it just seemed impossible」(Douglas)

「As long as it's a fun way to play its fine?」(Kousuke)

「Yes, it can even be something like tag the children's play」(Douglas)

「I'll begin listing what I know, let me know immediately if any of them are something you've never heard of before」(Kousuke)

Kousuke began listing all the games he's played as a child. He began with tag then continued listing hide-n-seek, soccer, basketball, trump cards, and kept going on and on. To this, Viare and Douglas answered "It exists" or "It doesn't exist".

Well, some had different names here though. In the end, all of the games he listed existed in this world.

「Even the ideas that I thought that didn't exist like trading card games, badminton and even cops-n-robbers all exist」(Kousuke)

「A lot of people were aiming for the reward money so it's a given」(Douglas)

「I wonder if there was something else..... Othello, how about that?」
(Kousuke)

「I've never heard of the name. What are the rules of the game?」(Douglas)

「On a 8×8 board you place on the center two black coins and two white coins. The objective is to have as many of your color on the board as possible by taking turns placing a coin on the board to steal the other player's coins by connecting.....」(Kousuke)

The difficult to explain portions, he drew on a piece of paper he received.

When he finished the explanation, Douglas's face brightened.

「The rules are simple, but it's definitely a deep game. Will this work?」
(Kousuke)

「I've never heard of this before!」(Douglas)

「Myself as well. This will definitely work! It's a surprise no one came up with this game before!」(Viare)

It was probably never invented because the rules were too simple.

Douglas's was in high spirit since he might be able to finally pay off the ransom. In the corner of his mind though, he had some doubts about Kousuke's identity for producing all of these unusual ideas, but he didn't want to be rude to his benefactor so he kept quiet. He didn't intend to pursue it in the future either.

「Let's report this to Kohhawk-sama immediately」(Douglas)

「How do we do that? Where's the place we report this to?」(Kousuke)

「You can do it here. Please imagine the rules and materials for the game and pray to Kohhawk-sama. Quickly, quickly!」(Douglas)

Douglas hurried Kousuke to pray. Kousuke wondered why he was being rushed and tilted his head. The person that was in dire need of money was Douglas, so why didn't he pray instead since everything was already explained to him, so Kousuke asked.

「Besides you, who else?! You're the one most familiar with Othello right? It has to be a detailed image when you send it!」(Douglas)

「If that's the case then I'll pray. Are there any specific etiquettes to praying to Kohhawk-sama?」(Kousuke)

「No, nothing in particular」(Douglas)

Kousuke closed his eyes and recalled Kohhawk's appearance as he imagined the game of Othello.

Inside Kousuke's mind, just like when he attained a Title, a voice was heard. He even felt someone patting his head.

『I've never imagined that we'll meet again in this kind of fashion. We guessed that you would duel an adventurer for a tournament spot and win the reward money to pay off the ransom money. To gather the money using the field I govern... It makes me quite happy. Ah, the one who patted your head was Mitalamu. Your unexpected conduct was very entertaining to her. She wants you to continue moving forward as you please. A new game, Othello... I have indeed received it. Farewell』(Kohhawk)

When Kohhawk's voice faded, something hard landed on the table and made Kousuke open his eyes.

Kousuke missed it, but a soft light appeared and 10 flash coins along with a certificate flew out of it onto the table.

「OOOOO! I can bring my child back home with this and pay back all the loans I took!

Thank you! Thank you!!!」(Douglas)

With the flash coins in his hand, Douglas lowered his head multiple time.

「Let's bring the certificate to the merchant's guild later. You'll receive a regular income that way」(Douglas)

Douglas picked up the certificate and handed it to Kousuke.

「Why are you giving it to me? Why not keep it for yourself?」(Kousuke)

「The only thing necessary to me were the flash coins. I have no need for the certificate. Plus, it doesn't belong to me. The only person who's worthy of holding that is the person who created it, you」(Douglas)

『I didn't really create it though...』Thought Kousuke as he reluctantly accepted the certificate.

He figured it would alright to have a bit more money just in case living expenses spiked. This certificate would help him ease that burden, of course, only if that happens.

When Kousuke finally receives his cut from the merchant's guild, he would become shocked at the amount of money he would receive. It will be beyond anything he could imagine. The amount would allow him to live without ever working again.

The three discussed a bit more and decided that Kousuke will escort Douglas secretly while he transported the ransom money. Kousuke had to do it secretly since the notice stated that the ransom must be brought by one person. Kousuke wanted to see everything through to the end even though he's only just met Douglas. He also felt that the culprits of the kidnapping might attempt to murder Douglas.

Two days until the deadline, Kousuke and Viare accepted Douglas's offer to stay at his place as thanks.

Kousuke was able to spend those two days without boredom. He met Douglas's wife, brought an Othello prototype to the merchant's guild, practiced with his throwing knives and toured around the town. You could say, it was very peaceful.

Chapter 20: The rescue drama left to chance

The ransom's deadline arrived, Douglas left his house and headed to the meeting spot. Kousuke kept some distance away from Douglas as he followed him. Viare stayed back at Douglas's place with his wife. Viare was unable to perform any covert actions so her presence would have been a hindrance.

The crowd made it difficult to follow Douglas, but on the off-chance that Kousuke lost sight of Douglas, he could hurry to the predetermined meeting spot.

The reason why Kousuke wanted to keep his eyes on Douglas as he traveled to make sure no one else was stalking him. However, unlike when the pickpockets were targeting him, Kousuke found it impossible to differentiate the gazes toward Douglas.

The two maintained a certain distance as they traveled before soon arriving at an abandoned building just outside of the city. This building was originally built to store farming goods like tools and seeds. It was quickly abandoned as it became decrepit. The only ones who frequent this building now are children who uses it as their "Secret Hideout".

Kousuke climbed a nearby building and kept his eyes on Douglas who was standing still in front of the abandoned building.

Five minutes, ten minutes, time kept flowing. Right when it was about to hit thirty minutes, someone climbed over a two-meter tall wall. It was a man in his thirties with normal, inconspicuous clothing. It looked like he was trying to

blend in with the crowd before coming here. If Kousuke didn't see the man climb the wall himself, anyone would have mistaken him as an ordinary citizen.

The two were discussing something, but Kousuke was too far to hear anything. Only the sight of Douglas becoming flustered could be seen.

The two's discussion ended quickly and the man ignored the depressed Douglas as he took the money. The man quickly departed and vanished over the wall.

Kousuke jumped down from the seven-meter tall building and got closer to Douglas to find out what happened. The contents of the discussion was quite obvious though.

「How was it?」(Kousuke)

「..... He told me to bring more money」(Douglas)

Kousuke figured that was the case since the man didn't bring the child with him.

「Even if he told me to get more money.. It's impossible.. He wouldn't even listen! What am I supposed to do now!」(Douglas)

「For the time being, want me to confirm your child's conditions?」(Kousuke)

「You can do that!?」(Douglas)

Douglas looked at Kousuke with an expression mixed with hope and surprise.

The man who departed was traveling slowly so Kousuke was still able to lock onto his presence.

「I can still track that kidnapper if I go immediately」(Kousuke)

「PLEASE! I'll return home to figure out how to secure more money!」(Douglas)

「Well then, I'll be going for a bit」(Kousuke)

When Douglas saw Kousuke nimbly jump over the wall, he was convinced that Kousuke was actually someone powerful.

Gaining the assistance of such a person, Douglas became fired up as his luck hasn't ended yet. Determined to secure more money, Douglas ran back to home.

Currently, Kousuke's tracking of the kidnapper has lead him into a prairie. Kousuke kept a close eye on the man from a nearby tree. The kidnapper was tens of meter away and would glance around to confirm that no one was around, not realizing that Kousuke was following him. The man, convinced that he was alone, soon entered the woods.

「Maybe their hideout is in the woods?」(Kousuke)

Kousuke muttered quietly as he cautiously approached the edges of the woods. He probed for presences that may be standing guard nearby. Once he confirmed that there was no one there he quietly stepped into the woods.

Inside the woods were numerous clapper alarm traps. Kousuke luckily stopped when he noticed the tripwire ropes then proceeded around them carefully.

In less than twenty minutes, Kousuke located the hideout through an area in

the woods with less trees.

He stopped moving forward and began circling around the hideout to see it more clearly.

The hideout was two story mansion, covering two basketball court's worth of space. The mansion looked at least a few decades old with its aged appearance and it was clearly not maintained since there were holes everywhere. Kousuke determined that this place was a temporary lodging for criminals. Criminals most likely found this place by mistake and the presences inside were showing signs that they would leave soon.

Kousuke traveled half a circle's worth around the mansion before he suddenly felt a gaze on him. The presence of that gaze vanished instantly the moment Kousuke noticed. He concluded that this person was an expert at suppressing his/her presence. He turned his head slightly to look towards the original direction of the gaze and locked just past the river. He stopped looking further to prevent the other from finding out that Kousuke noticed he was being watched.

Kousuke began walking towards that direction, awaiting a reaction. Whether he comes into contact with the other or not didn't matter, he would fight back or ignore it respectively.

Five minutes later, a rustling sound of grass could be heard and a faint, unusual smell drifted from behind him. The presence was noticeably close now and it was definitely human.

Kousuke drew a throwing knife and concealed it into his palm without letting the person behind him notice.

Whoever it was seemed to have prepared him or herself and approached closer to Kousuke. The other person was trying to make the first move while still suppressing his or her presence.

Uncertain of the other person's motive, the moment he or she got close enough, Kousuke quickly turned around.

The culprit was a lightly dressed woman in her twenties. She had long, black hair tied up with a red ribbon, clad in black and gray clothes and a cloth cover most of her face below her eyes. On the back of her waist was a small bag and a short sword. The first impression of her was like a kunoichi to Kousuke.

「AH!?(???)

The woman raised her voice slightly for getting spotted.

「Do you need something from me?」(Kousuke)

「..... What exactly is your purpose for being in this place? At first, I thought you were a comrade of those in that building but you showed no signs of meeting up with them. In fact, it seemed like you were observing them instead」

(???)

The woman relaxed her breathing to calm down before she asked Kousuke.

「A child of an acquaintance of mine was taken here. I came to confirm the child's safety」(Kousuke)

「Is that so.... Do you intend on infiltrating that building?」(???)

「Before I answer that, I have a question. Are you one of them?」(Kousuke)

「I'm not」(???)

There was no hesitation in her immediate answer.

Despite being a little suspicious, Kousuke answered her previous questions. The woman too, did not completely believe in Kousuke's words.

「I was considering it if I have the opportunity to do so」(Kousuke)

「Have you ever attempted something like this before?」(???)

「Nope」(Kousuke)

The woman's idea of infiltrating was most likely different from the time Kousuke infiltrated with a disguise so he answered honestly.

「If that is the case then please cease that idea. If you're caught, it would cause an uproar」(???)

「I guess so. I only planned on infiltrating if the opportunity presented itself. I don't plan on forcing it」(Kousuke)

「Yes, that is for the best. It would only be successful if you could fly or catch them off-guard. Otherwise, infiltrating would be too difficult」(???)

「I'm able to fly you know? Come to think of it, I can escape using teleport magic if I have to」(Kousuke)

「Is that the truth?」(???)

The woman was dumbfounded at Kousuke's announcement.

Kousuke nodded.

The woman stared inquisitively at Kousuke and determined that he wasn't lying before she went into deep thought.

Kousuke had no idea what she was thinking so he continued to investigate around the hideout while keeping some attention on her.

After around ten minutes, the woman suddenly spoke up.

「Would you like to cooperate?」(???)

「Cooperate?」(Kousuke)

「I needed to investigate the interior, but there's a chance I will be discovered if I do this alone. Could you carry me and fly to the roof once nightfall comes? If something happens, it would be great if you could teleport with me away from this location」(???)

「Just a little while ago I told you I have zero infiltrating experience right?」
(Kousuke)

「As long as you stay as quiet as possible it should be fine. I'll take the lead with the infiltration. In addition, your reconnaissance skill tells me that you're not completely inept」(???)

Kousuke was in deep thought this time around.

The person in front of him was most likely highly talented in regards to infiltrating. Otherwise, why else would she be attempting this?

He knew that he's not adept at this, however, acting together with a professional might give him the opportunity to rescue the child.

After she explained her situation, Kousuke concluded that it would be fine to trust her.

「I would like some information on your end since we'll be cooperating. It doesn't have to be everything. I just want to hear a bit about what's going on」
(Kousuke)

The woman figured it wouldn't hurt to deepen each other's trust and nodded.

「.....So be it. A child from an influential family was abducted. I was tasked with the rescue or if that's impossible, the confirmation of the child's location and the kidnappers' information」(???)

「On my side, our request for help was rejected by the army and the guild. I'm assuming your side is privately investigating?」(Kousuke)

「For the difficulty, I apologize」(???)

Kousuke tilted his head, unable to understand the meaning behind her words.

「The reason for the guild and army not assisting is due to an order. The concerning parties are trying to suppress the details of the kidnapping from spreading」(???)

「Is it possible that the kidnapped child is not from a typical noble family?」
(Kousuke)

The woman stayed silent, but her eyes reflected that he guessed correctly.

Kousuke figured that it was a child of a Duke or a Marquis.

His guess was actually spot on. It was possible that this situation could cause a diplomatic issue. However, Kousuke didn't have enough information so he never imagined that was possible.

If the abducted child was from this country then the country's government would have dispatched the soldiers and adventurers. However, the child in question was from another country that came here to spectate the tournament. The country sent out orders to the army and the guild to suppress the news that due to their negligence in security, another country's aristocratic child was kidnapped. Otherwise, not only would their credibility be put into question, it could lead to extreme political turmoil.

However, the negligent security was only a part of the reason. The child's carelessness and the large influx of spectators gave the kidnappers an ideal chance. In the end though, the other reasons just sounded like excuses at this point.

While the media suppression was active, the country was attempting to secretly solve this problem. Among those dispatched, this woman was one of them.

The result of this all would lead to the drastic reduction of criminal activities in and around the city, but none of this really mattered to Kousuke.

「Do we have a deal?」(???)

「Sure. It's not a bad deal for me anyhow」(Kousuke)

「Is that so, that's a relief」(???)

The woman softly sighed in relief.

「For now, let's move away from the woods. Patrols might find us if we stay here」(???)

Kousuke nodded and followed the woman.

Kousuke noticed that he couldn't hear her footsteps at all as he followed her. He started to observe her movements more carefully, attempting to mimic her quiet footsteps. Unfortunately, he was unable to discern anything special in her movements so his attempts failed.

As they walked, the two gave each other their names. She called herself "Nagare".

Soon, the two exited the forest and entered a field of large rock formations to wait for nightfall.

「We'll be hiding here until nightfall, but you didn't bring any food with you.... did you」(Nagare)

She judged seeing how lightly packed Kousuke was.

Kousuke, who didn't plan for a long-term excursion, was only carrying his sword and throwing knives. The jacket is in its hawk form and was left to guard Viare.

「Think I have enough time to quickly buy some from the city?」(Kousuke)

「I've brought some portable food so I do not mind sharing some」(Nagare)

Hearing the ninja-like Nagare's suggestion, Kousuke wondered what kind of food she would pull out.

The result? Kousuke was impressed. She brought out uncooked rice, miso paste and seaweed soup stock. She mixed all three together, boiled it and the two began to eat.

It's been such a long time since Kousuke was able to eat anything resembling Japanese food, he began to cry slightly while eating.

Nagare, who was worried that it wouldn't match his taste, was bewildered by Kousuke's state. The meal she prepared was not exactly exquisite.

「Thank you very much」(Kousuke)

Finished eating, Kousuke thanked her from the bottom of his heart.

「Was it that delicious?」(Nagare)

「It was delicious, yes, but it was more nostalgic. It's only been a few months, but being able to taste something from my country made me happy」(Kousuke)

「You are from the country, Kohma?」(Nagare)

「No」(Kousuke)

「I see, so there are other places that provide similar cuisines like Kohma」
(Nagare)

Hearing her mention Kohma, he inquired further about what kind of country it is.

Kohma is located in the third largest island among the Pereele Islands. The population is ten million strong. The culture is similar to the Edo era of Japan, just before the Meiji era.

The four seasons are a bit uneven there with longer summers and very short winters.

The children are dressed casually while the adults wear simplified versions of aristocratic kimonos and yukatas. The clothing Nagare is wearing is similar to the Japanese kimono as well.

Since their cuisine was similar to Japan's, Kousuke could eat familiar food to his heart's content if he ever travelled there.

「I want to visit at least once」(Kousuke)

「Emigration and immigration are not strictly regulated so please visit anytime」(Nagare)

「I'll definitely visit one day. I also want to eat rice again」(Kousuke)

Nagare became less wary of Kousuke hearing his favorable impression of her country. Most people would be delighted hearing their country praised, Nagare included.

With the tension between the two lessened, they were able to rest up well while waiting for nightfall.

Thus time flew by as the two leisurely conversed and a cloudy night soon fell on them. The two immediately prepared to move out.

「Well then, ready to go?」(Kousuke)

「Anytime」(Nagare)

Kousuke slowly started to float, flew behind Nagare and carried her up from

under her arms. He began gaining altitude and stopped when he reached five times the tree's height. Experiencing all of this for the first time, Nagare swallowed hard, not hiding her tension.

They flew atop the mansion and slowly descended.

「Stop」(Nagare)【TL: She said stop in English here 😊】

She stopped Kousuke's descent at the perfect height to observe the entire mansion accurately.

She searched for patrols and confirmed that none of them were looking up.

「Land on the roof」(Nagare)

「Got it」(Kousuke)

Following Nagare's instruction, the two quietly landed on the roof.

「We'll proceed quietly from this point on, be careful」(Nagare)

He nodded back at the whispering Nagare and the two began to move.

They infiltrated the mansion through a hole in the roof. Nagare landed inside without making a sound so Kousuke used magic to float down quietly.

As previous planned, Nagare began her search. She placed her ear against the floor and walls to confirm the kidnappers' position. She quietly opened a door and checked the hallway before beckoning Kousuke to follow.

The two checked each door in the second floor hallway and only searched rooms with no one in them. Their first priority was to map out and confirm the number of kidnappers inside of the mansion.

They were able to confirm one sleeping kidnapper, the rest of the rooms on the second floor were empty. They concluded that the kidnapped child was either in the first floor or the cellar.

The two returned back to the room they infiltrated from.

「Are you sure it's fine if I come with you to the first floor? We weren't caught so far, but I'll probably just be a hindrance down there」(Kousuke)

「I cannot deny that possibility. However, I also cannot deny that your magic is necessary. For the time being, I'll investigate alone. Please wait here quietly until I return」(Nagare)

Kousuke nodded.

「Then, I shall take my leave」(Nagare)

Nagare immediately headed out of the room.

Kousuke sat against a wall and waited. It was a quiet night with the occasional faint voices that came from the first floor.

Feeling slightly bored, thirty minutes already passed when the door finally opened. Kousuke rose slightly just in case, but immediately sat back down when he saw that it was Nagare.

「How was it? Did you find out where they're keeping the child?」(Kousuke)

「I have, yes. Just to confirm, how many can you teleport with you at once?」
(Nagare)

「From what my acquaintance explained it should be three people including myself」(Kousuke)

「..... This is troubling...」(Nagare)

「What is?」(Kousuke)

「There were four that were kidnapped. It's not possible to teleport with all four of them, correct?」(Nagare)

「Yup, impossible. I would need to teleport three times to get everyone out. I don't have enough mana right now to handle that」(Kousuke)

If he didn't use any magic to fly here and land into the room then he would have barely had enough though.

「The kidnappers would regularly check on the children so they'll immediately notice if any of them disappear. If they notice even one missing, they may take the remaining children as hostage to draw us out. Are you capable of abandoning the children?」(Nagare)

「Impossible」(Kousuke)

「I'm the same」(Nagare)

The two weren't coldhearted fiends that would abandon others as long as their target was safely retrieved.

「For now, let's change our plan. Instead of rescuing them quietly, let's ensure the safety of this mansion before getting the children out」(Nagare)

「In other words, exterminate the criminals?」(Kousuke)

「Yes. Another thing, none may escape so I advise disabling or killing them」
(Nagare)

「I can't kill them. I can probably disable one or two people, but when I do it'll make a lot of noise, revealing ourselves」(Kousuke)

「Is that so... Then I request that you escort and protect the children」(Nagare)

「That I can do. Would placing a protective barrier around them be sufficient?」(Kousuke)

「If you're capable of barrier magic then it's more than sufficient. With that, it'll erase the chance that the kidnappers would use the children as hostages. Now, I'll be explaining the details of our plan. First, engage without alarming the criminals, reduce all of their forces by disabling them. Next, guarantee the children's safety. Lastly, in the room where most of the criminals are conglomerated, seal all doors except for one and begin a surprise attack. In addition, everything is subject to change. That is all, any questions?」(Nagare)

「By “reduce all of their forces”, were you able to locate the positions of all the criminals?」(Kousuke)

「Yes, I've investigated their locations. Four are asleep, one person is currently writing reports, one person was reading a book, and the last five are drinking together」(Nagare)

「Can you win against those five?」(Kousuke)

「It will be fine. With their level of competence, I cannot say it will be easy, but as long as I proceed with caution, I will not lose. However, there is a chance some may attempt to escape. If that happens, please prevent them from getting away」(Nagare)

「Is it fine that I only do that?」(Kousuke)

「It'll be more than enough. Well then, let's go」(Nagare)

As before, Nagare took the lead and they began to move.

Against the sleeping criminals, Nagare used magic to deepen their sleep, tied them up and gagged them. The four were eliminated without a hitch. Next, the two headed to ones that were still awake.

Kousuke used magic to make those two drowsy just outside the room. After a bit, the two began nodding off so Nagare approached them slowly and used a sleeping magic on them. The reason why she did something risky like approaching them was because the spell required her to be in direct contact with her target.

The two sleeping criminals were tied up, gagged, rolled to the corner of the room and covered with a cloth to make them inconspicuous. Even if someone comes into this room, it'll take some time before these two sleeping beauties are found.

Next, they headed to where the children were being held. As they were proceeding down to the children, they almost ran into one of the criminals checking on the children. Luckily, they avoided detection by hiding in the shadows of the hallway.

When they approached the children, Nagare put them to sleep to keep them quiet. Kousuke lightly tied them up before setting up the barrier to keep them inside it. Among the children, one had a completely different atmosphere. It

was clear to Kousuke that this child was Nagare's rescue target. He was also able to confirm the identity of Douglas's child as well.

Once the barrier was set up, the two began the next step. The original plan to fight them was discarded thanks to Kousuke's magic so the two sealed two of the three doors and waited for the five inside to fall asleep.

Nagare was grateful since she wanted to avoid bloodshed as well. Since the criminals are still alive, it'll allow Nagare to gather more information from them later.

Since they were drunk, it only took around five minutes before they passed out. Nagare tied up the five that were comfortably asleep.

Once Nagare finished tying them up, the two disarmed the five and placed the weapons on the table. So far, everything is going according to the plan.

The only thing left for them to do was to lock up the criminals in the cellar, seal the cellar entrance and escape with the children.

For this step, Kousuke's ridiculous strength came into play. In less than thirty minutes he had all the criminals thrown into the cellar. To keep them from suffocating, a few air holes were made. Even if they wake up and get to the entrance, in their tied up state, it would be impossible for them to lift the hatch open.

「With this, the mission is mostly complete. Thank you for your cooperation. I

will report everything to the army. In the near future, I would like to give you something in return so may I know where you're currently resided?」(Nagare)

While Kousuke was explaining where Douglas lives, he thought up of something he wanted to know.

「The parents of the kidnapped children already paid the ransom. Would it be alright if we recover those for them?」(Kousuke)

「Is that so.... It should be alright. The ransom money was most likely stored in the same room with the man writing reports. Let's go together」(Nagare)

Nagare intended to gather the reports that man was writing up so Kousuke's suggestion was perfect for her.

As Nagare predicted, the ransom money was in the room. It looked like the other parents also paid quite a lot, there was a total of 28 flash coins. Similarly stored and separated was the criminals' operation funds.

「I'll be taking ten then」(Kousuke)

「I have confirmed it. I shall report this to the army as well. Now then, let's get the children and return to the city」(Nagare)

The two decided to not wake the children and carried them out instead. Nagare carried her rescue target while Kousuke carried the other three. He carried Douglas's child on his back and the other two in his arms. He felt he was being impolite by carrying the two children in his arms, but it was better than leaving them behind.

Using magic to brighten the pitch black night, the two travelled back to the city. While walking, they would feel the presence of beasts approaching but Nagare would scare them away with a kunai throw.

They exited the woods, passed the prairie and finally reached the city's entrance. Since it was dark, entering and leaving the city was being heavily regulated. However, when Nagare explained the situation, the guards seemed to have already been informed so the two were brought into the guardhouse. If it was just Kousuke, he would have definitely been barred out.

「Kousuke-kun. The two children in your arms, please leave their care to the soldiers. It would be inconvenient for you if you take them back with you, right?」(Nagare)

Kousuke nodded and handed the two children to the soldiers. He didn't want to do something troublesome like explaining everything to those two's parents. The soldiers would be more experienced and convincing in this situation.

The two carried their respective rescue targets and left the guardhouse.

「As for me, my destination is this way. Thank you very much for today. The reward will be delivered tomorrow the earliest, the day after tomorrow the latest. Now then, farewell」(Nagare)

Nagare bowed once and left. Kousuke saw her off for a bit before heading back to Douglas's home. His house's lights were still on. It was clear they were still awake waiting for Kousuke's return.

「I'm back~」(Kousuke)

「Welcome back. You've returned quite late..... Is the child on your back perhaps...」(???)

Douglas's wife was greeting Kousuke and her eyes widened when she saw the child on his back.

「Mm, I managed to rescue him. He is your child, right?」(Kousuke)

As he said that, he turned around and shifted the child to make it easier to see his face.

「Husband! DEEEAR!! Julio is... JULIO'S RETURNED TO US!」(Douglas's wife)

Soon after the wife's yelling, a series of loud banging and running steps could be heard before Douglas appeared at the front door.

「JULIOOO!」(Douglas)

They took their son from Kousuke and cried loudly while tightly hugging Julio.

The slightly late Viare saw this scene and was becoming misty eyed.

After a while, the parents were satisfied and carried Julio to his bed.

「Thank you.. Thank you so much!」(Douglas+Wife)

The husband and wife were bowing deeply toward Kousuke.

「Here's the money I managed to recover」(Kousuke)

Douglas immediately stopped Kousuke.

「Those were originally yours to begin with. Therefore, we cannot accept them. Please use them for your own personal needs」(Douglas)

Since Kousuke rescued Julio, they no longer needed to gather more money. The debt they incurred earlier was mostly paid off, leaving only the interests. They would be able to pay the interests off in three months' time as well. To their benefactor Kousuke, they didn't want him to spoil them any further.

At their persuasion, Kousuke returned the money into his pocket. It's true that the money was something Kousuke earned, but he himself has relinquished his ownership of them so he felt a bit awkward about taking them back.

「You must be tired after tonight. It's also very late so please take a rest」
(Douglas)

Douglas, his wife and Viare all tried to persuade Kousuke to rest so he agreed. He didn't feel too tired himself, but he felt pressured by the three. After cleaning himself a bit, he hopped into bed. In ten minutes, Kousuke was soundly asleep.

During the night, Nagare finished with her report and the kidnappers were captured by the army before dawn. Kousuke would find out about this the next day when he meets Nagare.

Chapter 21: The head of the family is waiting in vain

When dawn came, the Douglas household celebrated their reunion once they woke up. Julio was bewildered finding himself waking up back home, but when he saw his parents' faces, he forgot all about that and was simply overjoyed.

During breakfast, Julio was introduced to Kousuke and Viare and asked worriedly about what happened to the other kidnapped children. He thought that he was the only one that was saved, but was relieved to hear that everyone else was safe. Seeing his reaction, Kousuke thought『What a nice kid』 while Viare was happy to know that her assumption of the parents being good people wasn't wrong.

「Since everything's settled now, should we find an inn to stay at?」(Kousuke)

「That's true. It would be rude if we keep staying here」(Viare)

「I don't know how long it'll last, but please stay here until the tournament ends」(Douglas)

When Douglas heard the two's plan to leave, he immediately stopped them. They were about to leave before he could properly thank them.

「In the near future, one of our companion will arrive. I can't possibly ask you to allow another to stay here. That's why, we'll find an inn today before.... Ah!」
(Kousuke)

「What's wrong Kousuke-san?」(Viare)

Viare tilted her head at Kousuke who stopped mid-sentence.

「We might need to stay here until tomorrow」(Kousuke)

「We personally do not mind that, but is there a special reason?」(Douglas)

「The person I was cooperating with during the rescue is coming here」
(Kousuke)

「So it wasn't just Watase-san who was attempting the rescue. We have to thank that person as well. Could you tell me more about the details?」(Douglas)

Kousuke explained everything that happened after he separated from Douglas that night.

The wife took Julio out to go shopping to give them some privacy and to not remind Julio about the kidnapping incident.

Douglas and Viare were furious at the fact that besides Julio, other children were also kidnapped.

When Douglas yelled that they should all be hung, Viare agreed with him and it made Kousuke draw back slightly from their sudden bloodlust.

Around thirty minutes later, the wife and Julio returned right when the conversation ended.

Unlike the parents who had work and chores to handle, Kousuke and Viare were free so they kept Julio company. Of course, it was mostly Viare playing with Julio. Kousuke was just watching the two play Othello from the side.

As the group kept themselves busy, time flew by. Around four o'clock, a voice was heard calling out to Douglas in the store. It was Nagare wearing a violet-blue one piece dress with a white finish on the bottom. It looked like a simplified court dress.

「Yes, yes, with whom do I have the pleasure of meeting? We're currently closed until tomorrow though」(Douglas)

「I'm sorry for the intrusion, but I'm not a customer. I was informed that a young man named Kousuke is currently residing here」(Nagare)

「Ah, so you must be Nagare-san. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for rescuing my son」(Douglas)

Douglas bowed deeply before calling into the back of the store.

「Watase-san! You have a visitor!」(Douglas)

When Kousuke appeared, he seemed a bit surprised at Nagare's appearance. Viare who tagged along was also staring at Nagare's unfamiliar clothing.

To the arriving Kousuke, Nagare bowed slightly. Her long, untied black hair swayed as she did.

「As promised, I've come to give you our thanks. My master would like to personally reward you. With all due respect, could you accompany me?」
(Nagare)

「A reward really isn't necessary though. Would it be alright if you tell your master that I've gratefully accepted the thanks?」(Kousuke)

Nagare's countenance became a bit worried at his response.

「My master insisted on meeting you. Are you truly unable to accompany me?」(Nagare)

「Must I absolutely go?」(Kousuke)

『Getting involved with big shots always lead to trouble though... I had to enter a domain for Horun and Alice's sake, if I get involved with another big shot.. It'll just make things more difficult』Kousuke thought.

「To be absolutely honest, I wish for you to come. When I reported to my

master, I also mentioned you. My master became very interested with your high capabilities. Master and Shizuku-sama are both inclined to favor strength so naturally they wish to provide you a reward for your efforts first」(Nagare)

Shizuku was the child that Nagare was tasked to rescue before.

「If Kousuke-kun refused to come then my master may personally come after you. If that were to happen, master will definitely try to challenge you and may attack the wrong people. I've given my master a portrait of you so something like that shouldn't happen though」(Nagare)

「Is your master that imprudent?」(Kousuke)

Kousuke's voice was leaking incredible shock.

「Yes, those two parent and child are very hot-blooded when it comes to fighting」(Nagare)

『I should have told her to keep quiet about me...』Thought Kousuke, but it was unlikely that Nagare would not mention Kousuke to her master.

While his impression of Nagare's master was dropping, he decided to keep his evaluation of Nagare on hold. He needed to determine if she threatened him on her own or was ordered to do so.

「As long as I go the others will be safe?」(Kousuke)

「Yes, if any damage were to occur then it would be small. As long as its kept to that level, we'll be able to handle the aftermath」(Nagare)

「As it is, it seems that I should go. Before I accompany you I would like to finish arranging a room at an inn first」(Kousuke)

Kousuke planned to escape once Alice arrives if the situation becomes dangerous, but for now he accepted.

「As long as you come, a slight delay is acceptable」(Nagare)

「Since it's settled, Viare, let's get our things ready. We need to find a place quickly」(Kousuke)

After he consented, Kousuke, Viare, Douglas and his family went back into the house.

Douglas wanted the two to stay a bit longer since they haven't fully returned the two's kindness. However, Kousuke wanted to get a room as soon as possible before all the vacancies were taken due to the tournament. He's uncertain how long it'll be until Alice arrives and it was possible that it may be a while. Depending on the results, he and Viare may be intruding on Douglas and his family for a prolonged amount of time. Kousuke wanted to avoid that. Eventually, it was agreed that they will repay the kindness on another day and Kousuke and Viare left Douglas's home.

「It's the first time the two of us are visiting this city so does Nagare-san know of any reasonable inns?」(Kousuke)

「Yes, I know of a few. The cheaper inns are definitely filled up at this point. Decent inns are most likely close to filling up. If you're looking for a guaranteed room then it will be among the high class inns」(Nagare)

「How much would one night, one person cost?」(Kousuke)

「Let's see... I presume it was around two silver coins」(Nagare)

「TWO SILVER COINS!?!」(Viare)

Viare exclaimed loudly. A typical inn would cost around 4 copper coins per night. The price Nagare just indicated was significantly higher than what Viare was used to seeing.

Though not as surprised as Viare, Kousuke was a bit shocked since his only comparison was Shidi's inn.

By the way, the most prominent inns would cost around ten silver coins a night for one person. To put that into perspective, it's around a month's worth of income for most people used for one night. If the two of them stayed in a place like that, Viare would be most likely faint.

「Ko-ko-ko-kosuke-san!!?? Le-let's avoid a place like that!! O-okay!?!」(Viare)

It wasn't a selfish request. Their stay won't be for a night, but likely for several nights. For Viare, the expense would be beyond what she's normally accustomed to.

「If a cheaper inn is still open we'll be staying there you know? If they're all full, we'll just work up the ladder」(Kousuke)

He has ten flash coins so it wasn't a huge deal to him. Even long-term stays were possible. He ruled out camping outside since they have a large fund.

While Viare was praying for a cheap inn to be open, the three headed toward the inns.

Meanwhile, Kousuke learned of yesterday's occurrence after he fell asleep.

「The criminals were a part of an underground organization that traveled from Sebushik to Kalhode. That particular organization was mostly decimated half a year ago. All of their executives are deceased. The one's that were captured yesterday were mostly the underlings, the highest ranked were those that used to directly report to the executives.

Their purpose here was to amass funds to rebuild their organization.

Since they lacked proper leadership, their plans and actions were truly careless. If they had a careful and detailed planner then doing something outlandish such as kidnapping Shizuku-sama wouldn't have occurred. In fact, they had no idea that they kidnapped a Marquis's heir. They were truly shocked

to hear Shizuku-sama's identity」(Nagare)

「So they never intended to kidnap someone so important since they had to remain obscure」(Kousuke)

「I agree. However, since they're unable to create a decent plan, getting apprehended would only be a matter of time」(Nagare)

「Hmm, does it mean that their organization is completely gone now?」
(Kousuke)

「Actually, there are still others around. When the soldiers were heading to the mansion, they encountered a man that was coincidentally checking in on his comrades. That man immediately escaped after seeing the soldiers so it could be concluded that there were others around」(Nagare)

「Do you think they'll begin kidnapping in other places?」(Kousuke)

「Possibly」(Nagare)

「Persistent fellas」(Kousuke)

「Truly...」(Nagare)

「Which reminds me, what will happen to the criminals that were captured?」
(Kousuke)

「For the sake of keeping them quiet, once they gave us the necessary information, they were beheaded」(Nagare)

『Truly unsettling how light another's life is here...』Kousuke chiseled into his heart.

To him, death penalties were rare and inhumane. However, in this world, it was considered a proper judgment. It prevents the criminals from committing a second offense and deters others from causing troubles.

「Ah, we've almost arrived」(Nagare)

Nagare pointed at an inn.

The three entered the inn. The moment they entered, Kousuke and Nagare guessed that it was no-good.

There were too many people.

Just to make sure, Kousuke spoke with someone at the reception and received the expected answer.

「I'm terribly sorry. We currently have no vacancies」(Receptionist)

「I see. A pity. Hmm.. Do you know if there are any vacant inns around here?」
(Kousuke)

「Let's see... Other inns like this that are aimed for adventurers or simple travelers are most likely full at this point. Even if they seem empty, their vacant rooms are likely to be reserved」(Receptionist)

「Thank you very much」(Kousuke)

「Sorry for being unable to accommodate you」(Receptionist)

The next three inns the three tried were the same. With each attempt, Viare's complexion became worse.

「It seems that we should prepare ourselves and head to an expensive inn」
(Kousuke)

「It does seem like that...」(Viare)

Kousuke and Nagare were looking at Viare sympathetically.

「It's that one. Just consider this a once-in-a-lifetime luxury that you deserve」
(Nagare)

「I think it really might be once-in-a-lifetime」(Viare)

「Isn't that a bit exaggerated?」(Nagare)

「With the income I had as a guild receptionist.. It really isn't exaggerated」
(Viare)

In addition, Viare was currently unemployed.

While dragging the dispirited Viare, the three entered the high-class inn.

It was a large, sturdy inn that was not too gaudy or pomp, but it definitely did not look cheap.

The front receptionist, despite seeing Kousuke's commoner-like appearance, did not express disgust. It seemed their training was also on a higher level.

「Welcome. Do you require a room?」(Receptionist)

「Yes. Do you have any vacancies?」(Kousuke)

「Yes. We currently have some vacancies」(Receptionist)

「Could we reserve three private rooms?」(Kousuke)

He planned on getting a room for Alice as well.

「Would you perhaps be more interested in one of our larger rooms that can accommodate three people?」(Receptionist)

「I prefer to have the rooms separated between men and women」(Kousuke)

「That's quite alright. The large room has separated bedrooms」(Receptionist)

「Hmm, then that's fine」(Kousuke)

Kousuke was about to ask if that was fine with Viare but stopped. He realized Viare's experience with this is no different from his.

「I'll take the large room please. How much is the lodging?」(Kousuke)

「It will be five silver coins per night. I can discount one silver coin per night if you relinquish the use of the studies, the den, and special services such as a massage. Would you like me to proceed with that?」(Receptionist)

「Hmm.... Is it possible to receive that discount and pay the difference when I wish to use them?」(Kousuke)

「Yes, that is possible. In that case, you will pay upon using the facility or receiving the service」(Receptionist)

「Then let's go with that. I'll take the discount. For now, I'll pay for ten days' worth of lodging」(Kousuke)

He took out two gold coins and gave them to the receptionist.

After confirming they were real, the receptionist gave Kousuke his change.

Prior to receiving the keys, the receptionist explained that the dining area may be accessed freely between 7 in the morning to 9 in the evening. She also explained the times for the bath.

「Your room number is 202. It is located up those stairs and on the left hand side down the hall」(Receptionist)

「We'll be in your care for some time」(Kousuke)

「We.. We'll be in your care!」(Viare)

Seeing Kousuke and the nervous Viare lower their heads, the receptionist viewed them favorably. The receptionist was a human being before an inn's staff, so she felt happy when she dealt with courteous guests.

「Yes. We shall do our utmost to accommodate your needs」(Receptionist)

The three left the reception and headed to room 202.

『This inn would make for a great souvenir story for Shidi』Thought Kousuke as he observed everything around him as the three walked.

From Viare and Nagare's perspective, Kousuke looked tense and assumed he was nervously glancing around.

「It's quite large and everything seems well kept. The price of five silver coins makes sense」(Kousuke)

Kousuke's experience as a maid allowed him to discern that the inn's level of maintenance of their room was on par with the aristocratic households.

「Is it really alright for us to stay in this room?」(Viare)

Viare couldn't help but feel overwhelmed by the luxurious nature of the room. Kousuke was used to this so it naturally didn't bother him since his standard of "Luxurious" was the "Royal Suites" back in Japan.

「Everything was already paid for so we'll be staying here for the next ten days」(Kousuke)

「It's so different from the orphanage.. I'm worried I won't be able to sleep」
(Viare)

「If it's just this then shouldn't you be fine? Humans are pretty adaptable creatures」(Kousuke)

He ignored his own inability to fully adapt to this world.

「I have a feeling that getting used to this will be bad. It'll definitely change something in me from this point on」(Viare)

「That might be so. Hmm... It's cold?」(Kousuke)

Kousuke wanted a drink of water and grabbed the water jug on the table. He was surprised when he noticed it was actually chilled.

Nagare explained the reason for that.

「Is there a magic formation drawn on the bottom of the water jug? That formation will keep the water jug chilled so you can always enjoy a cup of cold water」(Nagare)

「That's convenient. I wonder why other inns don't have this?」(Kousuke)

「That formation only lasts for one day and not everyone can produce them. A magic aptitude of D+ or higher is required. It's very difficult to hire individuals with such a rank」(Nagare)

The inn is expensive because they offer these detailed and uncommon services.

「I see. I've always been making cold water myself so I never knew something like this existed」(Kousuke)

「Controlling the water's temperature is something most people cannot do. It seems your magic aptitude is definitely not ordinary either」(Nagare)

Nagare muttered quietly to keep the other two from hearing, she memo'd in her heart another strength of Kousuke. Her master ordered her to investigate Kousuke's strength as much as possible.

The oblivious Kousuke finished drinking his water and asked Viare a question.

「I'll be heading out soon, but what do you want to do Viare?」(Kousuke)

「I'll come too. It's impossible for me to stay in this room alone right now」
(Viare)

「Nagare-san, can Viare come along as well?」(Kousuke)

「That's fine. As long as Kousuke-kun comes along, there shouldn't be any issue」(Nagare)

Receiving a favorable reply, Kousuke and Viare dropped off their bags and left the room with Nagare.

With the inn's receptionist's "Have a good day" echoing behind them, the three left the inn.

The moment they stepped outside, Viare sighed heavily. An inn is where one should be able to relax, but she's experiencing relief from leaving the inn. Her perception of a journey became slightly skewed with this experience.

It was planned to head straight to Nagare's master, but Kousuke spotted a blacksmith and decided to drop by.

「Welcome!」(Blacksmith)

An elderly man in his sixties welcomed the three.

While Kousuke approached the blacksmith, Viare and Nagare were checking out the merchandises on the shelves.

「I would like this repaired」(Kousuke)

The man picked up the sheathed sword on the counter and thoroughly examined it.

The sword's weight was unexpectedly heavy and he frowned as he somehow managed to unsheathe the sword. His face became grimmer seeing the condition of the blade.

「Because you didn't get your sword repaired regularly it became like this! Just how long did you use this sword without getting it repaired?」(Blacksmith)

「No, the sword's condition was the result of one fight」(Kousuke)

「There's no way it would become like this after one fight...」(Blacksmith)

Attracted by the two's conversation, Nagare inched closer and observed the sword's condition from the side.

「That's in a terrible condition」(Nagare)

「You also think so too, right? It's impossible for this sword, that was built to be sturdy, to become this battered after one fight!」(Blacksmith)

「I think so too」(Nagare)

「No, it really was just one fight! I cut a stone sculpture with it! That's why it's condition is like this」(Kousuke)

「You cut a sculpture? Are you sure you didn't smash it?」(Nagare)

Nagare questioned and checked for any changes in Kousuke's expression.

「I did cut it」(Kousuke)

Nagare muttered quietly after hearing Kousuke's declaration.

There were many that could shatter rocks with a sword. However, to be able to slice apart a rock.. It was truly a small amount. Brute force alone would not allow someone to achieve that was Nagare's understanding. After all, the

household Nagare serves handle various weapons and Nagare has seen the training the household members undergo. However, even if they were considerably skilled, only a handful are capable of completely slicing through a rock without shattering it.

To know one's limit is a good thing! For Nagare, she wasn't able to imagine Kousuke's limit and grew suspicious. He was simply too strong for his age. Nagare wracked her brain, trying to figure out Kousuke's identity. 『Could he be a specially trained spy from another country?』Thought Nagare.

「So you sliced through a rock... If that's the truth then the sword's condition makes sense」(Blacksmith)

「It's really the truth though... Anyways, can you repair this?」(Kousuke)

「I can do it but.. I think it would be faster to just replace it. At this point, even if I repair it, this sword probably won't last a year」(Blacksmith)

「It hasn't even been half a year since I bought this.. To replace it already is a bit...」(Kousuke)

「Half a year? That's absurd!」(Blacksmith)

「I didn't mean to use it so violently. Let's forget about repairing it then. Can you re-forging it into a knife instead?」(Kousuke)

Feeling apprehensive about giving up his first sword, as a compromise, he asked the blacksmith to change it into something that he could still use.

「It'll take some time, you alright with that?」(Blacksmith)

「How long?」(Kousuke)

「Let's see..... Five days, yes as long as I have five days its possible」
(Blacksmith)

「Thank you, that will be fine」(Kousuke)

「Sure, leave it to me」(Blacksmith)

「Well then, about buying a new sword. My budget is three flash coins. Do you have a sword that's sturdier than that one?」(Kousuke)

「Just to let you know, getting a sword in a different city would be a better idea if your budget is three flash coins. The highest quality weapon I have for sale is that halberd over there for two flash coins」(Blacksmith)

The blacksmith pointed behind him with his thumb at the halberd decorated on the wall.

The blade of the halberd was well polished with its bright, silvery luster. The handle was scarlet colored with various etchings and embroideries that gave the entire weapon an impossible to compare aura. Without a single speck of dust on it, the diligence in its care was truly apparent.

「Is the quality of the other stores in this city similar to yours?」(Kousuke)

「Probably」(Blacksmith)

「If they're the same then I'll buy from here. I'm not up for traveling to another country at the moment」(Kousuke)

「Well, I'm fine as long as the things in my store sells. I'll ignore the price and just bring out all the sturdy swords, that alright?」(Blacksmith)

「Yes, please」(Kousuke)

「Wait a bit」(Blacksmith)

The blacksmith went into the backroom. Kousuke could hear clanging noises

as the blacksmith rummaged for the appropriate weapons.

Fifteen minutes later, the blacksmith came back with two swords.

The first sword was of similar length to his current one while the second sword was a “Long sword” that exceeded the previous sword’s length by a meter.

「Both of these are sturdier than your sword. This broadsword was forged using an alloy of Iron and Trest ores. It’s also sharper and lighter than your sword. This long sword was forged using an alloy of Trest, Silver Shak and Bramul Steel ores. Its weight is perfect for hacking and slashing. The long sword is definitely sturdier, but its weight is staggering. If you’re not confident with your strength, I would recommend the broadsword」(Blacksmith)

「May I try holding the long sword?」(Kousuke)

The blacksmith nodded and handed the long sword to Kousuke. It was certainly heavier than his previous sword, but that’s all it was. It wasn’t heavy enough to burden Kousuke.

The blacksmith’s eyes widened as Kousuke began to practice his swings with the long sword without shaking.

「I never expected that you could even hold that with those thin arms of yours」(Blacksmith)

「May I try holding it as well?」(Nagare)

Seeing Kousuke swinging it lightly, Nagare wanted to confirm if the sword was really heavy or not.

「Sure」(Kousuke)

Kousuke offered the sword to Nagare with both of his hands.

「Heavy!?!」(Nagare)

She assumed the sword was around 5kg, but it was closer to 10kg. The discrepancy in the sword's weight almost made Nagare drop it. Expecting something like this to happen, Kousuke calmly took the sword from her.

「Can I buy this?」(Kousuke)

「Seems like you can handle that sword well. The knife and the long sword, the total will be one flash coin and two gold coins. The long sword's belt is a service」(Blacksmith)

While giving his thanks, Kousuke placed two flash coins onto the counter.

Once he received the long sword set and his change, Kousuke spoke up to confirm something.

「The knife will be ready in five days correct?」(Kousuke)

「Yea, I'll finish it by then」(Blacksmith)

Kousuke strapped the newly bought long sword onto his back, called out to Viare and left the three left the store. The blacksmith shouted out “Thank you for your patronage” the moment they stepped outside.

The detour finished, the three finally headed toward the place Nagare’s master was staying. The current time was five o’clock in the evening and the streets were busy with people returning from work or perusing for dinner.

Chapter 22: The tear that flowed and its impact

The three who ate up a lot of time with their detour have finally reached the estate Nagare's master resided in. They operate a dojo in Kohma, the estate before them was a branch dojo.

The atmosphere around this place was clearly different from the surrounding. It looked like a dojo from a historical drama mixed with some unique elements, making it a one-of-a-kind. The sun was setting and the entire place was bathed in scarlet light.

When they passed through the open gate, in front of them was the dojo, to their right was the practice grounds and to their left were the living quarters. The living quarters were separated between the primary and secondary residence. The dojo's disciples were allocated into the primary residence while the secondary residence would only be used by Nagare's master and guests.

【TL: Primary residence = You live there most of the time // Secondary residence = Vacation home, summer home, etc】

Nagare was explaining the use of the facilities and the buildings while they passed through the gate.

Seeing everything before him, Kousuke felt that he was seeing something familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. When he was still in Japan, he didn't live near a "samurai-like" estate. His experience here made him slightly disappointed since it was sort of off the mark.

「I'll be guiding you two to the guest room in the secondary residence. I'll be reporting your arrival to my master after you settle in. Please relax in the room for the mean time. Now then, please follow me」(Nagare)

Following Nagare's lead, the three entered the secondary residence.

He took off his shoes and stowed them away into the shoe rack.

『At least this is the same as Japan』Thought Kousuke as he stepped into the wooden paneled hallway.

「So you take off your shoes?」(Viare)

At the front door, Viare was surprised with this unusual manner and hurriedly mimicked Kousuke's action before entering.

「Kousuke-kun seems to be accustomed with this」(Nagare)

「This is a natural thing to do back in my hometown」(Kousuke)

「As expected, your hometown and Kohma are very similar. Oh, you two there, come here for a moment」(Nagare)

She called out to the two nearby female servants and asked them to escort Kousuke and Viare.

Lead by the two servants, Kousuke and Viare approached the guest room. The servants opened the sliding door and urged the two in. Kousuke's expectation of a tatami floor in the guest room was shattered when he saw the wooden floor with a large rug on it. Contrary to Kousuke's belief, since paper was very expensive in this world, the numerous paper sliding doors in this estate would make many consider it an upscale mansion.

The female servants briefly departed and returned with two cups of oolong tea and steamed buns. They bowed once more before leaving the room again.

Kousuke sat down on a cushion and began drinking the tea. Viare didn't touch the tea or snacks and curiously glanced around at the unfamiliar room.

The steamed bun was filled with sweet potato paste and it matched the tea well. It made Kousuke feel at peace.

「Kousuke-san, you look relaxed」(Viare)

「It's because I'm able to enjoy an atmosphere similar to my hometown. Being here makes me feel like I'm back home」(Kousuke)

「Why don't you go back once in a while?」(Viare)

「If I'm able to go home... It's a complicated thing」(Kousuke)

「Were you disowned?」(Viare)

「Something like that」(Kousuke)

Rather than his parents, it was Earth that “disinherited” Kousuke.

As the two killed time by chatting, they heard footsteps from the hallway and the sliding door suddenly opened. It was Nagare.

「Sorry for making the two of you wait. Please come with me」(Nagare)

Following Nagare's lead, they reached the large room where the family's head resided. Inside, besides the family head, Shizuku and a few others were also seated.

In the furthest back was a man wearing a black ceremonial outfit. He didn't look a year past his forties. His stout build and calm demeanor made him look like he was still in his prime. Shizuku was seated next to the man, wearing a pink ceremonial outfit embroidered with various flower designs. She was seated demurely and both Kousuke and Viare were impressed by her doll-like features.

Everyone in the room suddenly concentrated their eyes onto Kousuke. Their eyes were firmly examining Kousuke and their strict expressions made Kousuke feel slightly uncomfortable.

The inconspicuous Viare suddenly realized that this was a noble's house and slightly regretted her decision to come. Housesit at a luxury inn or come with Kousuke to a noble's house... In the end, both seemed like a terrible choice for her.

Nagare offered the two a seat before moving to Shizuku's side.

Once the head saw Kousuke take a seat, he stared at Kousuke briefly before speaking.

「A pleasure to finally meet you. I'm Rubidashia household's current head, Gen'ou Amasera Rubidashia. I'm the father of Shizuku, the child you helped

rescue. For your assistance in rescuing my daughter, you have my deepest gratitude」(Gen'ou)

While giving his thanks, Gen'ou slowly lowered his head. Even though the movement was simple, Kousuke and Viare almost sighed in admiration at how natural it looked.

Those around the head stayed quiet despite seeing him lower his head to a commoner like Kousuke. It made Kousuke feel that this household was quite open-minded.

「For inviting me today, I am truly grateful. As for the thanks, I have gratefully received and accepted it previously from Nagare so please do not mind. Moreover, I also received assistance in the rescue」(Kousuke)

Drawn into the room's atmosphere, Kousuke's tone also became firm and formal.

「Nevertheless, to be able to rescue my daughter without any issues, as a Marquis and as a father, it truly made me joyous. I cannot thank you enough for

all of this. Shizuku, please give your thanks as well」(Gen'ou)

「Shankyu veri much」(Shizuku)

Noticing that she bit her lip while speaking, Shizuku blushed slightly and lowered her head.

Kousuke and the rest pretended to not notice. The household somewhat expected her to be unnerved. In fact, even if Gen'ou did the same, everyone except for Kousuke and Viare wouldn't be surprised. The fact that he has been able to maintain a proper speech was impressive to the rest.

The reason lied in the nature of the Rubidashia's household. The current and previous heads were selected for their talent in fighting so everything else was lacking. No matter how much they were disciplined, much like a curse, the heads were never able to change this nature.

For instance, this family would trip if the floor they're walking on had a slight elevation difference. Even if they see it or were warned about it, they still trip.

The family's disposition forces them to rely on external assistance for day-to-day activities. Especially for their young ones.

However, not everything is terrible. Due to their unreliability, they do their utmost to assist the each other. The family has never experienced internal strife due to their strong bond.

「You're welcome」(Kousuke)

Kousuke nodded and accepted Shizuku's thanks.

「Now then, I had a small banquet prepared for this occasion, please relax and enjoy」(Gen'ou)

「Thank you very much」(Kousuke)

The servants were definitely stationed right outside this room. The servants near the entrance slid the door open and numerous female servants flowed in bringing in one dish after another. Even entertainment was prepared as a musician immediately came in and began playing.

The trays placed before their eyes were filled small dishes. A vast array of Kohma cuisines were prepared. Just like a Japanese inn, a nabe was prepared as well, still bubbling slightly. The delicious aroma that drifted from the dishes reminded Kousuke of home.

Since Kousuke and Viare were technically foreigners, they prepared chopsticks, spoons and forks for them on their trays.

The prayer finished, Gen'ou announced the start of the banquet. Kousuke grabbed the chopsticks without hesitation and began eating the rice.

The rice's steamy aroma, the texture when he bit, the subtle sweetness, the flavor he always wanted again touched his heart deeply. After chewing fifty times he finally swallowed.

The quality was lower than Japanese rice, but it was still delicious. Drowning in nostalgia, his rice was finished instantly.

「Oh my, what a wonderful appetite. Rice isn't a native thing here, but I'm glad to see you like it. It was worth bringing that dish out. Also, you're quite familiar with how to use a chopstick!」(Gen'ou)

Gen'ou grinned happily as he spoke.

「Rice is a staple food in my hometown. Chopsticks are mainstream as well. Since it's been such a long time since I've eaten rice, I ended up finishing it quickly. I'm sorry if my manners offended you」(Kousuke)

「No, no, those who prepared it would be happy to see that you finished it cleanly. Please, enjoy the other dishes as well」(Gen'ou)

With Gen'ou's urging, Kousuke reached out for a radish cooked in soup. His chopstick never stopped, eating one dish after another.

Gen'ou and the rest were satisfied seeing Kousuke happily eating their country's dishes.

Besides him, Viare was slowly eating the various, unfamiliar dishes. It was an eye-opening experience for her since everything was something she's never eaten before. Gen'ou was enjoying Viare's constantly changing expressions as she ate.

Seeing how concentrated the two were in eating, Gen'ou and his family conversed among themselves to allow those two to enjoy themselves. The topic was the tournament.

Among them, Shizuku stayed quiet and Nagare assisted her. Her pace was similar to Viare since if she rushed, she would end up dropping the food. Still, there were a few times she dropped her food. Nagare would catch those pieces with a small plate and feed it to Shizuku. Nagare would assist Shizuku happily since Shizuku's unreliability looked extremely cute and adorable to her.

When Kousuke finished eating and placed down his chopsticks, the grinning Gen'ou offered him a large sake bottle.

「How about a drink?」(Gen'ou)

His offer didn't have a shadow of a Marquis behind it, but instead a fatherly demeanor.

「Uh.....」(Kousuke)

Kousuke was at a loss. His experience with drinking was a few beers at most. He didn't have any urges to drink strong alcohol. Kousuke was never drunk before so he was afraid how he would behave if he did get drunk. However, he was also afraid of being rude by declining the head's offer.

In the end, he accepted a little hoping that he would get away with just a slight buzz.

「I'm not accustomed to drinking so just a little please」(Kousuke)

Kousuke grabbed the sake cup on his tray and offered it.

「Do you dislike sake?」(Gen'ou)

Gen'ou asked while pouring.

「That's not it, I have yet to reach the legal age to drink so I've never drank a lot before」(Kousuke)

「Is that so. In our house, anyone who's fifteen or older are allowed to drink. I offered without thinking, please accept my apology」(Gen'ou)

「Please, do not worry about it」(Kousuke)

Kousuke drank the cup clean. The sensation when the sake flowed into his

mouth was surprisingly not strong. It tasted close to water with a refreshing, sweet aftertaste. It was unexpectedly easy to drink. The alcohol content of the sake was low, but it was easy to get drunk off of since it's easy to drink. It's that kind of sake.

「Delicious.... I think」(Kousuke)

A clumsy comment came out of his mouth. Gen'ou didn't mind the comment and offered him another cup.

「Hmmm, may I get another cup?」(Kousuke)

「I'm relieved it's to your liking. It's among our top five sakes we have in our country」(Gen'ou)

The moment Kousuke's cup was about to reach his mouth, he stopped. It was because he noticed Viare staring at him. Specifically, she was staring curiously at his sake cup.

「Viare, do you want to drink some?」(Kousuke)

「Eh? Ah.. I just want to try it because I want to know how it tastes? Something like that? I've never drank before so maybe I shouldn't? But.. Maybe just a little then?」(Viare)

「So?」(Kousuke)

「..... I want to drink a bit」(Viare)

She had her head lowered as she answered in a quiet, shy voice.

『She's like a cute, little animal』Thought Kousuke before he looked over at Gen'ou.

「Would it be alright if she can have a taste?」(Kousuke)

Kousuke asked with an underlying implication in his tone.

Gen'ou, understanding that he was worried Viare might get hungover, nodded that it will be fine.

「Miss, please give me your sake cup」(Gen'ou)

「Please no! I'll pour it myself!」(Viare)

Those words were her was to refrain a noble from pouring her a drink.

Gen'ou, understanding this, smiled to ease her tension.

「You do not have to be so tense. I consider it a perk to be able to pour a drink for a cute young lady」(Gen'ou)

His flattery was said in a friendly, calm manner so Viare ended up blushing.

She took a sip of the sake and her eyes widened in surprise.

「..... It's easy to drink」(Viare)

Gen'ou smiled seeing that she enjoyed it.

Kousuke had his cup refilled and took the bottle from Gen'ou to offer him a cup as well. The three were slowly enjoying the taste of the sake.

Shizuku finished eating and went to Gen'ou's side. By then, the three finished the entire bottle. Shizuku was staring at Kousuke with her big, round eyes. Her eyes were reflecting great curiosity.

「Is there something you would like?」(Kousuke)

「Are you strong?」(Shizuku)

The family's strong talent in combat ingrained their personality deeply with the urge to find strong people.

After hearing Nagare's report about Kousuke, Shizuku couldn't help but find out. Her curiosity was provoked intentionally by Nagare. When Nagare reported about Kousuke, she kept the information about his strength ambiguous. Nagare and Gen'ou concluded that if a child like Shizuku asked instead, it would lower Kousuke's vigilance.

It seemed to work since Kousuke was about to answer Shizuku's question. However, Viare immediately stopped Kousuke and spoke in his stead.

「He'sh shwong. He can beats duh shwongess monshterr in mai regiun.. and entered a domain, compreeted hish tash and came back shafly~」(Viare)

「Houu...」(Gen'ou)

At Viare's words, Gen'ou's eyes were glittering with strong interest. His suppressed interest could no longer be contained.

Feeling even more pleased with his response, Viare continued.

「Alshoo~ Koshukeh ish a.....」(Viare)

Kousuke immediately pressed his hand over Viare's mouth. His body moved involuntarily since he had a bad feeling.

His judgment was correct since Viare was about to say he's a Dragonslayer.

Gen'ou and the others were shocked at Kousuke's action, but he didn't notice them since he was glaring at Viare.

「... Are you drunk?」(Kousuke)

「I nevar drank beeforr.. What'sh it like to beeee druuunk~~ I feeeeel fwuffeee~~」(Viare)

「I think that means you're drunk」(Kousuke)

Kousuke guessed he was right seeing how flushed her cheeks were as well as her odd articulation.

「Is it because it was her first time drinking... Or is she just a light weight? For

the meantime, Viare, you should lie down」(Kousuke)

「Okaaaaay~ I taik nap nao~」(Viare)

While saying that, Viare ended up plopping her head down onto Kousuke's lap. In her delirious state, she remembered how her father would give her a lap pillow and ended up stealing Kousuke's lap.

As long as she didn't say anything unnecessary, Kousuke left Viare alone on his lap for the meantime.

「What was the miss trying to say just now?」(Gen'ou)

「Ah.... that's a secret. Well, let's leave it as myself being relatively strong」
(Kousuke)

「I guess it would be unreasonable to force you to answer that. Then would it be alright if we can have one bout? To tell you the truth, after Nagare gave me her report.. I've been itching to have a bout with you」(Gen'ou)

「Like a spar?」(Kousuke)

「Mhmm」(Gen'ou)

While considering how to answer, Kousuke's arm was pulled by Shizuku.

When he turned over to her, his eyes met her shining, begging eyes.

「Me too」(Shizuku)

Kousuke muttered in his head 『Battle junkies.. This father and daughter..』

「.....That's fine. As long as it's only one bout each with the head and the young miss」(Kousuke)

He figured he might learn something fighting against a dojo's head. He agreed to fight with Shizuku because he thought it wouldn't be too difficult.

Incidentally, Kousuke accepted a bout with Gen'ou with a similar feeling. He thought they would go easy on him, but he underestimated the battle junkie pair.

「OOOOO! Then tomorrow morning! After breakfast!」(Gen'ou)

「I don't mind that」(Kousuke)

「I'm looking forward to it, father!」(Shizuku)

「Me too!」(Gen'ou)

Both Gen'ou and Shizuku had a joyous expression. Kousuke felt that those two were extremely close.

The cheerful promise brightened up the rest in the room and the banquet became even livelier.

The banquet slowly calmed down and ended in around an hour.

「Viare, we're going back to our room」(Kousuke)

He shook Viare lightly to wake her up.

She was no longer drunk and woke up to her normal self.

「When you return to the room, someone will pick you up for a bath so relax until then」(Gen'ou)

When Kousuke and Viare were about to leave, Gen'ou advised them loudly.

The two gave their thanks and returned to their room. The room only had one futon laid with the next room having the same thing.

「It's fine if I sleep over in that room right?」(Viare)

「I think so. Sleeping together in one futon is a bit...」(Kousuke)

As if she imagined the two sleeping together, she blushed brightly and lightly

smacked Kousuke's back before moving her luggage into the other room.

And a few moments later, two female servants came to lead them to the bath.

The baths were separated by gender and was built in a large fashion to accommodate their numerous disciples. Its breadth was around 7-8 meters. At the moment, Kousuke was able to hog up the entire bath for himself and was soaking in a very luxurious sensation.

He thoroughly enjoyed the bath for more than thirty minutes. The moment Kousuke returned to his room, Viare returned as well in her pajamas.

Her appearance was a bit erotic so he shifted his eyes away. Viare was oblivious to Kousuke's reaction and took out some skincare products to cleanse her face.

The two conversed a bit before deciding to head to bed.

The two said "good night" to each other before closing the sliding door. Kousuke's consciousness slowly faded as he vaguely sensed Viare's presence in the adjoining room. Soon, he fell into a deep sleep.

When Viare noticed Kousuke's breathing becoming even, she hurriedly entered her futon to sleep.

~~~~~

The alarm clock beside his head began ringing, indicating that it was morning.

Kousuke reached his hand out of the futon and stopped the alarm.

「Mmmmmmm~~!」(Kousuke)

He raised his arms and stretched his body to remove the rest of his grogginess.

He glanced at the clock to check the time, went to the curtain and opened it to see the morning weather.

「A splendid, cloud-less day. It'll probably get a bit hot in the afternoon」  
(Kousuke)

He left his room without changing, washed his face in the bathroom and went down to the living room.

「Goo~Mornin」(Kousuke)

Already finished with breakfast, he greeted his father who was watching the news and his mother who was washing the dishes.

「Good morning. The two of us already ate so Kousuke should quickly eat as well」(Mother)

「Right-o」(Kousuke)

On the dining table was a bowl of radish miso soup, fried egg and some roasted sausages. As soon as he took a seat, a bowl of rice was placed in front of him.

After saying “Itadakimasu”, he ate incredibly fast.

「You should chew your food well」(Mother)

He nodded without listening to his mother's words and continued to vacuum the food into his mouth.

He finished in five minutes, said "Gochisousama" and quickly got up.

He still had some time before he had to leave for school so he sat next to his father to watch some TV.

「Anything interesting happen these days?」(Kousuke)

「There was an insane fan that couldn't handle it when his baseball team lost and it escalated into a mob fight between fans」(Father)

「Was anyone injured?」(Kousuke)

「Most of them only had minor injuries. They were hitting each other with rolled up newspapers」(Father)

「What a peaceful fight」(Kousuke)

「It was」(Father)

After twenty minutes of watching TV with his father, Kousuke got up to get ready.

He brushed his teeth, went back to his room, and made sure he didn't forget anything after changing.

He grabbed his bag and said farewell to his parents before he reached the front door.

「I'm heading out now」(Kousuke)

He turned around and yelled out to his parents once more before leaving.

The scene outside in front of him wasn't his neighborhood, but a sea of trees.

Shocked at the scene before him, Kousuke immediately turned around to find his home.

His peaceful home was no longer there... The sea of trees around him was slowly fading away then he suddenly woke up.

~~~~~

「.... A dream... so it was a dream.....」(Kousuke)

『No wonder the miso soup I had in the dream tasted like the one from last night...』Thought Kousuke as he stared blankly at the ceiling, trying to recall the details of the dream.

『I guess I'm a bit homesick after seeing so many familiar things...』Thought Kousuke as he stood up slowly.

At that moment, the sliding door to the adjoining room gently opened.

「So you're awake」(Viare)

Viare, who was awake first, thought it was time to wake up Kousuke so she entered his room.

When she looked at Kousuke's face, she placed her hand against her mouth as her eyes widened. She was completely shocked at what she was seeing.

「What's wrong?」(Kousuke)

Kousuke tilted his head slightly at her weird reaction.

「..... Were you crying?」(Viare)

「Crying?」(Kousuke)

Kousuke tapped around his eyes. A wet sensation was transmitted to his fingertip.

Kousuke was surprised to learn that the dream was nostalgic enough to make him cry. Simultaneously, he was shocked to learn how mentally frail he was at the moment.

「I saw a really nice dream. I guess I cried because of that. It's nothing, don't worry about it alright?」(Kousuke)

He halfheartedly waved his hand around, half deceiving himself and half trying to keep Viare calm.

「Is... That so...」(Viare)

Viare answered with a face lost in thought as she slowly closed the door.

The sight of Kousuke crying had a strong impact on Viare.

Until now, Viare had always assumed Kousuke was a superman. Therefore, she always thought that he could do anything and asked him for help a lot.

He has never failed at anything so she had always assumed that him doubting or crying over anything would never happen.

However, seeing his tears in person, she realized just how wrong she was.

The Kousuke that always felt distant was actually another human being like herself, who has troubles and suffers normally.

Viare's assumption that Kousuke was a superman was due a few haphazard information.

She only knew that Kousuke somehow became a Dragonslayer. What she doesn't know that he was transported here from another world and when he became a Dragonslayer, he was placed into a near-death state.

If she knew everything, though he's a bit special, he's just an ordinary person that has a lot of power. Conversely, if she didn't know anything about him then he would have just seemed like someone with a lot of power.

Since she only knew a part of the whole story, this misunderstanding sprouted.

Though she still doesn't know the whole story, at the very least, the belief that Kousuke's a superman was broken.

Viare made a decision then.

If our current relationship of myself constantly relying on you continues, I'll just be a burden.

I have to stop spoiling myself with your help! I will grow to get rid of my clumsiness myself!

She vowed with both hands gripped tightly over her chest.

Kousuke, who had no idea what Viare was doing, changed his clothes and left his room to wash his face.

On his way to the bathroom, a servant informed him that breakfast would be delivered to his room soon so he quickly washed his face and returned.

When he opened the sliding door to his room, he noticed the futon was cleaned and a tray with breakfast was left. Viare's portion was what she normally eats in this country.

When Viare was getting dressed, a servant asked her if she would like a Kohma styled breakfast or another so she chose her usual breakfast style. 【TL: Youshoku vs. Washoku (Western-influenced or Japanese cuisine, usually a Bread, egg, sausage vs. rice, miso soup, fish)】

Most of the disciples in this branch dojo preferred bread during breakfast so they had this option. The Kohma styled meals are offered for the times Gen'ou and the others come.

The servant that returned to retrieve his emptied breakfast tray informed him that the master would like to spar in an hour. Kousuke asked her to tell him that's fine.

「You're going to spar?」(Viare)

「Mhmm. I promised after you fell asleep from the sake」(Kousuke)

「Hmmm... Even though you would normally refuse something like that」
(Viare)

Her face was obviously expressing her surprise at the unexpected promise.

「I think I was a bit drunk then. I thought one or two matches would be fine. That reminds me, do you have any headaches?」(Kousuke)

「It doesn't hurt anywhere」(Viare)

「Seems I worried you would be hungover for no reason」(Kousuke)

Considering how drunk she was last night, Kousuke was a bit worried. He even planned on getting medicine for her if she did have a hangover.

「The head seemed very strong, will you be alright?」(Viare)

She knows that Kousuke is strong, but Gen'ou also looked impressively strong. She saw his title with her gift, "Unparalleled Swordmaster". The two's strength were beyond her comprehension, she couldn't help but worry for Kousuke's safety.

「I should be fine. I doubt he'll go all out during a spar」(Kousuke)

He responded that he would be fine to calm Viare.

The hour flew by as they talked. A servant came by their room to escort them. The sliding door connected to the yard was opened and the cool morning air flowed in.

The two, led by the servant, left for the dojo.

Chapter 23: Begin, FIGHT!

The dojo's surrounding was crowded with 80 disciples, taking up positions to be able to clearly see into the dojo through its windows and entrances.

When they noticed Kousuke approaching, all of their gazes locked onto him. He caught faint whispers of "Is that him?" and "He doesn't look so strong" from the disciples.

It seemed Gen'ou announced to everyone that he will be sparring with a guest today.

Ignoring the gazes and whispers, Kousuke entered the dojo.

Further in the dojo, Kousuke saw Gen'ou and Shizuku with their backs turned, meditating deeply in seiza. Both of them were wearing clothes most karate and judo practitioners wear during practice. From the chatter outside, it was clear the two noticed Kousuke's arrival, but remained still to further heighten their concentration.

「Good morning to you both」(Nagare)

Near the parent and child, Nagare stood up and approached Kousuke and Viare.

「Kousuke-kun, are you fine with that outfit? If necessary, I can have a practice-ware prepared for you」(Nagare)

「I'm fine with this since this jacket's pretty tough」(Kousuke)

「Is that so. The weapon for this spar will be made of wood. Master and Shizuku-sama will be using the same weapon, a wooden sword. Please select the weapon best suited to your taste from the rack on the wall. The only rule, do not kill. We can treat light injuries and fractures, but please hold back to a degree to prevent the possibility of a serious injury」(Nagare)

「I'm not accustomed to holding back though」(Kousuke)

「I will immediately stop the fight if I deem it too dangerous」(Nagare)

「I understand」(Kousuke)

「Do you have any questions?」(Nagare)

「What are the win/loss conditions?」(Kousuke)

「Until it is clear who has won, otherwise please continue the fight until the other is unable to continue」(Nagare)

Kousuke nodded and headed to the weapon rack.

「Viare-san, please stay by my side. Pieces of wood might fly out from their weapon during the spar. Well, it doesn't happen often, but just in case」
(Nagare)

The Amasera Dojo's wooden weapons are built with extremely durable wood. Furthermore, they're coated with something similar to lacquer.

Never has there been an incident of their wooden weapons breaking during a spar. The weapons are inspected every five days and those that are brittle are used as firewood and replaced.

「Please be at ease, I'll protect you if that were to happen」(Nagare)

「I thank you in advance」(Viare)

Viare, who is aware that she is incapable of dodging, lowered her head.

While listening to their conversation, Kousuke was inspecting each wooden sword to find one that was the easiest to handle.

『There aren't any wooden katanas.... I can't find a glimpse of a bamboo sword either... Maybe this world doesn't have anything like a katana』(Kousuke)

While thinking such things, he reached for the heaviest wooden sword. He simply felt uncomfortable with anything lightweight.

Seeing that Kousuke selected his weapon, Nagare called out to Gen'ou and Shizuku.

「The preparation is complete. Let us begin the match」(Nagare)

「Mm」(Gen'ou)

With a nod, Gen'ou stood up. Shizuku, who stood up at the same time, walked to Nagare's side.

Kousuke and Gen'ou walked to the center of the dojo and faced each other.

「My best regards」(Kousuke)

「Likewise」(Gen'ou)

The two gave each other a slight bow and awaited the signal to start.

Nagare's raised arm flowed down gently while announcing "Begin".

The spar began quietly.

Gen'ou gripped his wooden sword with his right hand and took a seigan stance. At that moment, Kousuke thought he felt a breeze blow past him. The pressure Gen'ou emitted seemingly had a life of its own. It was completely unlike the rigid, lordly atmosphere he showed yesterday. The Gen'ou before him only had fighting in his mind. Seeing his stance, Kousuke felt like he was staring at a stalwart tree, a natural fortress that towered over him. 【TL: "Kata-

te no Seigan no Kamae” or “One-handed Seigan stance” [Link to example](#)】

On the other hand, the wooden sword in Kousuke’s right hand was dangling slovenly by his side. He gave off nothing close to an intimidating pressure or aura. Among the audience that were not strong enough to understand underestimated Kousuke due to this. The rest were amazed to see Kousuke unmoved by Gen’ou’s aura and compared him to a willow tree, parrying and evading the harsh wind.

Ten seconds passed, twenty seconds passed, but neither moved from their spot.

Kousuke intended to counter Gen’ou’s attacks, intensively observing his every movement. For Gen’ou, he noticed his entire being was being monitored by Kousuke and could not move carelessly. If he was only being watched then it wouldn’t have been a problem, but every time he intended to attack, Kousuke would react, effectively sealing his attempts.

The moment Gen’ou wanted to move, he’s stopped, this was repeated ten times and three minutes flew by.

This quiet offense and defense was noticed by some, unnoticed by some, regardless, no one was able to say anything due to the tension.

『This situation can’t be held...』(Gen’ou)

When his eleventh attempt was thwarted, he resolved himself to go through with his next attempt. Gen'ou determined that Kousuke was strong and felt it would be a waste if he didn't enjoy this fight.

「UOOOOOOOOOOOOO!」(Gen'ou)

With great spirit he shouted, stomping off strongly toward Kousuke while swinging his wooden sword down.

A split second after his stomp resounded through the dojo, a loud, clashing sound of wooden swords exploded.

Gen'ou grinned happily when he saw his swing, that was strong enough to pulverize a boulder, was blocked easily by Kousuke.

The disciples instantly changed their view of Kousuke's strength seeing this. If they tried to block in the same way, they easily imagined themselves smashed onto the floor.

With the long sword incident before, Nagare knew that the possibility of Kousuke successfully blocking Gen'ou's attack was high so she was not surprised.

Shizuku's eyes were shining brightly at this scene. She was unable to suppress

her excitement and was praying for her turn to come faster.

Numerous clashing sounds echoed throughout the dojo. Gen'ou was boldly attacking while Kousuke was blocking each and every single strike.

After the hundredth clash, Gen'ou and Kousuke separated.

While collecting himself and organizing his breathing, he stared at Kousuke. He showed no signs of fatigue was unchangingly staring at Gen'ou.

Gen'ou dropped his right arm and coaxed Kousuke to attack with his left hand. A declaration, "Come, now's your turn to attack".

Understanding his intent, Kousuke brought his right leg back slightly and gripped the wooden sword with both arms pointing backward.

「Here I come!!」(Kousuke)

With a cry, he charged with both legs.

He closed the four meter distance between them in under a breath and swung his wooden sword up.

A sharp, wind-like slash approached Gen'ou.

The loudest clash of the day was heard at that moment. The explosive clash was not of flesh and bone, but once again between two wooden swords. A few moments later, the clattering sound of a wooden sword hitting the floor was heard.

The moment Kousuke charged, Gen'ou felt a dreadful attack approaching, accurately predicted the trajectory of Kousuke's swing and blocked it. Though he successfully blocked that swing, the force that shocked through his wooden sword made it impossible for him to hold on without hurting himself. While withdrawing backward, he released the wooden sword from his hand.

Seeing Gen'ou drop his sword, the entire audience was in an uproar.

Among them was Gen'ou's hearty laugh.

「Kukukukuku.... This is great! It's been so long since I dropped my sword! Fun! This is too fun! I must thank the gods for allowing me to meet someone this strong! I'll give it my all now! Let's enjoy our fight to the fullest!」(Gen'ou)

His excitement peaked to the highest.

The calm, stalwart aura vanished and a violent storm of fighting spirit replaced it.

The disciples were overwhelmed by this rarely seen aura of Gen'ou. Being able to make Gen'ou serious, Kousuke's existence became unfathomable to the disciples.

Viare and Nagare were also overwhelmed by Gen'ou's aura. As for Shizuku, she was staring unblinkingly to not miss a single detail of the fight.

Being smashed with the sudden oppressive aura, Kousuke became dejected. It was obvious to him that Gen'ou was 100% serious and would not hold back anymore. It made Kousuke want to return to the inn.

However, Gen'ou would clearly not listen or allow him to leave so he continued to focus on the fight.

With everyone's attention gathered, Gen'ou used magic.

「Are you seriously going all out!?!」(Nagare)

Nagare shouted in astonishment.

The magic Gen'ou used was a body reinforcement type, commonly used in battlefields. This magic would easily allow the user to kill even with a wooden sword.

This completely disregarded the “No killing” rule. His switch completely flipped, Gen’ou opted to use a lethal method. Nagare moving to stop the fight was an expected outcome.

However, she was unable to stop anything. Cold sweat was streaming down her back. Gen’ou’s cold glance toward her completely sealed her from moving. Nagare felt imminent death coming if she continued.

「I, Gen’ou Amasera Rubidashia, come forth!」(Gen’ou)

Gen’ou moved. Just like Kousuke, Gen’ou instantly closed the gap between the two.

Kousuke blocked the incoming horizontal slash.

「You can move! It wouldn’t be fun otherwise!」(Gen’ou)

Slash everything apart! Within this kind of atmosphere, Kousuke displayed

unhindered movement that made Gen'ou grin.

Compared to before, Gen'ou's movement drastically changed. Moreover, not only did his speed increase, he constantly changed his tempo along with mixing in feints. This made it very difficult for Kousuke to perceive his attacks.

In fact, Kousuke has lost sight of Gen'ou's wooden sword and has already received a few blows to his chest and arms.

「What's wrong! Your full strength is nothing like this right! Don't just block, attack me! FIGHT BACK!」(Gen'ou)

Without stopping his relentless attacks, Gen'ou taunted.

『You asked for it then』(Kousuke)

There was barely any pain, but being hit constantly seemed pathetic so Kousuke decided to fight back.

「There!」(Kousuke)

The slight flaw after the reckless swing was not overseen, Kousuke immediately took the offensive.

However, that “flaw” was something Gen’ou intentionally showed to coax Kousuke to attack.

The incoming slash was read by Gen’ou, but he did not block. He was instead wholly devoted to evading. He knew if he tried to block, he would be blown away or smashed into the floor.

The two exchanged dodges and blows for some time. Kousuke’s attacks would occasionally graze Gen’ou, but none were clean hits.

『How can he avoid all of this!?!』(Kousuke)

The reason? Kousuke’s attacks were too straight forward. His swings were fast and powerful, but that’s all it was.

Naturally, Kousuke was using feints as well. However, against Kousuke who was gathering information and experience on the spot, Gen'ou, who has years of experience and is capable of utilizing his senses to the fullest, saw through the shoddy feints instantly. From Kousuke's eyes and arm movements, his stance and steps, various information leaked out of his body which Gen'ou grasped. To Gen'ou, the strength, speed and direction of Kousuke's attacks were simply easy to read.

This spar brought to light the adverse effects of Kousuke constantly fighting weaker opponents. He's been winning due to his extraordinarily high stats, but he's neglected the importance of actually being able to hit his targets. Against those with strength, Kousuke was akin to a wild beast relying on instinct.

In order to land a blow, Kousuke increased the speed of his attacks while sacrificing an acceptable amount of defense. Unfortunately, Gen'ou, who's grasped quite a bit of Kousuke's habits, only received scratches.

Gradually Gen'ou was beginning to counter. Taking an offensive stance was fine with him since he could dodge everything.

The fight between the two was suddenly flipped. Gen'ou was dodging and landing his attacks, while Kousuke ignored the blows and kept swinging.

Completely absorbed in trying to land a clean blow, Kousuke had no idea what the outcome would be. However, for Gen'ou, the outcome was obvious. If this continues, he knew he would lose.

The physical and mental burden of knowing that one hit would end it all was simply immense. Eventually, he'll become too tired and would get hit. The next

ten minutes will be in his favor, but if it drags out beyond thirty minutes, Gen'ou was certain it would be unfavorable.

『I do not want to be defeated in such fashion. Before I run out of strength, I will end this match with my most powerful strike!』(Gen'ou)

He decided to use the Rubidashia's hidden art, something only the head of the household is allowed to know.

It was named "God Slayer" to depict its purpose of overthrowing the gods. It was handed down by the ancestors to their descendants over the course of 300 years, in hopes that one day, a descendant would be able to bring out its completed form.

This hidden art did not require magic or an exaggerated stance because all it required was a mere swing of the sword.

It's probably a mistake to say that it's just "a mere swing" though. Available only to the firstborns, this singular strike is imbued with strong intent and fused perfectly with the skills and techniques that were polished through endless years of training.

Though, rather than a hidden art, this strike could be considered the accumulation of the entire Rubidashia heritage.

In that sense, this can also be considered eternally imperfect. Training until death, that is the way of the “Amasera Swordsmanship”. Today’s best singular strike will not even be comparable to the next days. Even Gen’ou, who is considered the master among masters, is bound by this.

Gen’ou is the most skilled with overhead strikes, but his predecessors, whom had varying preferences, used different swings. Essentially, “God Slayer” has no singular form.

The moment Gen’ou poised his upper body, the pressure in the room suddenly vanished. Everything was being imbued into his wooden sword, not a drop leaked out.

The disciples began to stir, as many of them were unaware of the “God Slayer” hidden art.

「To go to this extent.....」(Nagare)

Nagare uttered in amazement. Though she is incapable of using it, she knew what the “God Slayer” hidden art was.

Since Gen’ou was absolutely serious, she gave up on stopping the spar. She instead readied herself for the worst, Kousuke’s death.

Everything was absolutely stilled and hushed in the dojo. The disciples' eyes were glued onto Gen'ou, while Kousuke tensely awaited the strike to counter. Among the spectators, Shizuku was the most enthralled, her eyes could not stray away from Gen'ou.

Suddenly, Gen'ou moved. Compared to before, his movement was slower and lighter. He was casually walking forward, with only Kousuke understanding the dangers of his unusual steps. Gen'ou approached, casually stepping forward like he was walking through a park. The moment the spectators were aware that Gen'ou moved, he was already near Kousuke.

「EIII!」(Gen'ou)

With a shout, Gen'ou mightily swung down his wooden sword.

Breathing, the amount of force, his movement, the swing's timing, Gen'ou was convinced everything in his singular strike was perfect.

In response to this sharp swing, Kousuke brought his wooden sword overhead to receive it. One hand on the handle, the other on the back of the blade, he stared at the moment the two swords clashed. Kousuke's eyes widened immediately. Gen'ou's wooden sword split his wooden sword into two halves with ease.

『Wha?! I didn't feel any impact!?!』(Kousuke)

Stupefied and flustered, Kousuke immediately shifted into defense.

He crossed his arms in attempts to block the still incoming strike. At this, Gen'ou was surprised. His strike sliced through hardened wood with ease, normally, who would think to take on such a strike with their own body? A slight disturbance arose in Gen'ou's heart seeing Kousuke's actions, weakening "God Slayer's" power.

Feeling a less than expected impact on his jacket sleeve, Kousuke immediately struck Gen'ou's chest with the half-sword he had.

「A hit! I finally landed a hit!」(Kousuke)

Rather than winning or losing, Kousuke rejoiced that he finally landed a hit. Even if it was a fluke, after such a long struggle he felt relieved that it was possible to land a hit on Gen'ou.

The tension in the dojo eased and Gen'ou withdrew his wooden sword.

Sensing that the two will not continue further, Nagare called for the spar to end.

The spectators all exhaled the breath they held from such a tense fight.

「That was an entertaining fight, thank you」(Gen'ou)

The grim look Gen'ou had during the spar was replaced with a satisfied grin. However, Kousuke had a complicated expression. In the end, he only managed to land one hit. He was heavily vexed and mortified by this.

「Is your arm alright? Even if it wasn't at full strength, that strike still had a lot of force behind it」(Gen'ou)

「Hmm..... It's just a little swollen. I can't feel any problems with my bones so I think it'll end with a light bruise」(Kousuke)

「..... Ho~, quite the sturdy one. Just in case, allow one of our doctors to take a look」(Gen'ou)

Even if it wasn't at full strength, the remaining force could have pulverized a boulder into dust. Gen'ou was taken aback that the end result was only a light bruise.

Although Kousuke doesn't seem injured, it was possible he was enduring so Gen'ou offered a medical examination just in case.

Kousuke obediently accepted Gen'ou's proposal. Immediately, the examination began. The result: No abnormalities.

「To truly be uninjured, this...」(Gen'ou)

Despite being struck severely, Kousuke getting away with minor scratches made it impossible for Gen'ou to hide his shock.

「Well, it's Shizuku's turn next, but do you require some rest first?」(Gen'ou)

「Mhmm. It won't be for that long though」(Kousuke)

「Is ten minutes sufficient?」(Gen'ou)

Kousuke nodded, walked to a wall and sat down leaning against it.

「Here you go」(Viare)

Viare approached and offered a moistened towel.

Kousuke offered his thanks and accepted it. It wasn't enough to cool off his body, but it was refreshing just to wipe off the sweat.

When he noticed a cool breeze hitting him, he realized Viare was fanning with a folding fan.

「Thank you, I appreciate your thoughtfulness」(Kousuke)

「I just imitated Nagare-san」(Viare)

For Gen'ou's sake, Nagare prepared for his respite. Seeing this, Viare felt she should do the same for Kousuke.

Despite her hasty follow-up, it still allowed Kousuke to cool-down and eased his mind for the upcoming spar. After giving his thanks once more, he stood up.

At the center of the dojo, Shizuku was already waiting. Her hair was tied into a single ponytail behind her.

「Please take care of me」(Shizuku)

To the approaching Kousuke, she lowered her head. Kousuke returns the bow and the two face each other. Her childish expression reduced, instead gallantry and dignity sprung forth from her.

Shizuku took up a similar stance as Gen'ou and Kousuke, like before, stood stance-less. Unlike Gen'ou, Shizuku was holding the wooden sword with both hands.

With Nagare's signal, the match began.

Shizuku did not probe and wait like Gen'ou and boldly charged forward. Without pacing herself, she was slamming every ounce of her strength against Kousuke.

Her movements were unlike a child of ten years, they were exceptional. Truly peerless compared to others her age. However, she was far from the level of Gen'ou and Kousuke was able to cope with her charge. Still, Kousuke refrained from retaliating at full strength, only lightly striking her with his wooden sword when a large opening was shown.

He wasn't playing around. As evidence, his countenance was stern and serious.

He was following her every movement, memorizing the Amasera swordsmanship. He's convinced that if he is able to understand the Amasera swordsmanship, he will be able to land a blow on Gen'ou without a fluke.

It was too difficult to discern when he was fighting Gen'ou as his movements were too sophisticated and overbearing to comprehend. In that respect, Shizuku's swordsmanship was still in the budding process, giving Kousuke the breathing room he needed to observe carefully.

The two exchanged blows for another ten minutes and Shizuku's movements began to dull. Her shoulders were trembling as her breathing roughened, evidently showing that she was close to her limits. Not ignorant of her approaching limit, Shizuku resolved herself to end the spar with one final strike.

Feeling the subtle change in Shizuku, Kousuke distanced himself from her and awaited her final move.

Shizuku gave a thankful gaze toward Kousuke's consideration and took up a stance.

She poised her right leg back and lowered her waist slightly. Gripping both hands onto her wooden sword, she rested it pointing up on her right shoulder.

The spectators were experiencing a déjà vu moment. The stance was different, but the change in the room's atmosphere was just like when Gen'ou used "God Slayer".

The most surprised was definitely Gen'ou for Shizuku was never taught anything related to "God Slayer".

He pondered just how did she learn this.

Shizuku comprehended the essence of "God Slayer" from observing Gen'ou earlier. She is also of the same bloodline and upon seeing the awe-inspiring "God Slayer" she instinctively understood that this was something she must attain.

However, she still lacked the technique and experience to truly utilize the "God Slayer". When Gen'ou used it, he was able to fully imbue his fighting spirit and aura into his weapon. Shizuku, however, was unable to do so. Like that, her immaturity was accentuated heavily. As she is now, her only "passing mark" would be her determination and spirit. Still, she was convinced that she must use this now.

Shizuku took a few deep breaths and regained her composure.

Preparation completed, she took a step forward.

「YAAAAAAAAA!」(Shizuku)

The diagonal slash toward Kousuke's shoulder was, from Gen'ou's perspective, filled with numerous flaws but it definitely held the essence of "God Slayer" in it.

"God Slayer", taught only from the head to the heir, was being displayed by his daughter whom wasn't taught an inkling of it. Pride filled his chest as a smile appeared on his face.

A sharp, crashing sound resounded throughout the dojo. The two objects that crashed was Shizuku's wooden sword..... and Kousuke's left arm.

He abandoned defending with his wooden sword and received her blow with his left arm instead.

Shizuku was too absorbed into unleashing her "God Slayer", she was unfazed seeing Kousuke using his own body to receive it and did not adjust the force behind it. Still, she lacked training to fully utilize it and the force Kousuke felt was still less than when Gen'ou used it.

「.....」(Kousuke)

「.....」(Shizuku)

Shizuku, who had her wooden sword blocked, and Kousuke, who had received her strike, were both absolutely still.

Both maintained that position for thirty seconds before Shizuku finally pulled her wooden sword away and stepped back. The two lowered their heads toward each other.

「Whew」(Shizuku)

Reaching her physical limit, Shizuku plopped down onto the floor. Immediately, Nagare appeared besides Shizuku to care for her.

Shizuku's expression was joyous from being able to go all-out in the spar. Despite how tired she was, there was only an aura of satisfaction coming from her.

Gen'ou and Kousuke were both similarly satisfied and joyful.

Kousuke learned a lot from the two bouts. The Amasera swordsmanship's movement from Shizuku and the sophisticated swordplay from Gen'ou. Although he was unable to fully comprehend everything Gen'ou displayed, Kousuke nonetheless had every bit of it memorized.

Therefore, everything was valuable for Kousuke.

「With this, the promise of two bouts was fulfilled, I'll be heading back now. Mind if I borrow the bath? I want to wash off my sweat」(Kousuke)

「I do not mind, but the baths aren't warmed right now」(Gen'ou)

「As long as I can wash myself even cold water is fine」(Kousuke)

「Mm. Please use it freely then. And thank you for today, it was a good experience, for both myself and Shizuku」(Gen'ou)

Kousuke gave Gen'ou a bow before calling out to Viare to leave the dojo. After being shown something so overwhelming, the disciples' opinion of Kousuke was completely reversed from before.

As Gen'ou saw the two off, Nagare appeared beside him.

「What do you think of Kousuke-kun?」(Nagare)

「It's regrettable」(Gen'ou)

An immediate answer.

「What is regrettable? Could you explain?」(Nagare)

「His ability is by no means lacking. Rather, his foundations are beyond exceptional. He undoubtedly focused on training endurance and physical strength from a very young age. Otherwise the imbalanced nature of his ability cannot be explained」(Gen'ou)

Against his high physical ability and tidy appearance, the lack of experience and dull combat instinct felt imbalanced to Gen'ou. 【TL: Tidy appearance = lack of scars basically. He looked too clean to be a warrior/fighter/adventurer etc】

If Gen'ou knew that it has only been half a year since Kousuke began using a sword, before admiration he would feel amazement and shock.

「If I had the chance, it would have been ideal if I trained him. Without a doubt, he would have become a great, no, an absolutely peerless swordsman in history」(Gen'ou)

This high evaluation, not only Shizuku and Nagare, but the nearby disciples that heard Gen'ou were shocked.

They were convinced of Kousuke's strength with the spars just now, but to be given an evaluation of that magnitude was incredible.

「He's that powerful? It seemed that master held the advantage in the bout though」(Nagare)

「I had the advantage? It may seem so, but most of my attacks had minimal effect. His calm expression never broke despite being barraged with hits. I had the advantage only because it was a spar limited with rules. But.. If it was a death match.. My probability of losing would be high」(Gen'ou)

Hearing this, Nagare's alertness toward Kousuke increased and she decided to monitor him quietly in the future.

「By the way, why did master judge that master cannot train him?」(Nagare)

「Cannot train him? I wouldn't go that far. He is currently still learning on his own, but he's also decided on a combat style. However, if I tried to forcefully train him to use Amasera swordsmanship, what do you think will happen? What I said before, I was just mentioning that I wished I met him earlier. It's truly regrettable that I only met him now」(Gen'ou)

「So self-taught..... It's definitely suitable for surprise attacks. But that won't be reliable all the time, would it not be for his sake if we trained him some legitimate swordsmanship?」(Nagare)

What Nagare was hinting at was something Gen'ou already understood. To that, he shook his head.

「If he was an ordinary man, then yes. Compared to the swordsmanship that was refined over a long period of time, self-taught styles tend to have large, unforeseen flaws. That would normally be a weakness with self-taught

swordsmen. However, with his high physical abilities, those flaws could be considered feints instead. Even if he does a wide swing and gets countered, he can shrug it off. In fact, I struck at his opening and was viciously countered instead. Since it's like that, him furthering his self-taught style is well suited for him」(Gen'ou)

「I see, so that's the case. I have given unneeded advisement」(Nagare)

「It's fine」(Gen'ou)

『There's no need to teach him anything anyways』(Gen'ou)

Gen'ou perceived that Kousuke was learning through his observation of Shizuku. Learning through self-comprehension and experience, it would be more beneficial in the long-run for Kousuke. Gen'ou was convinced that Kousuke's style of learning was well suited for him.

He had no intention of pressuring Kousuke for “stealing” his family's style. It's not like everything was shown to him today. With and without armor, varied terrain combats, there was a myriad of information not unveiled today.

Imagining how Kousuke would grow with what he learned today, Gen'ou's excitement to fight him again began leaking out.

Looking forward to the future fight, Gen'ou's spirit was ignited and shouted for everyone to resume their training.

After washing himself, Kousuke informed the maid he bumped into in the hall that he and Viare would be leaving soon.

The maid asked him to return to his room for the meantime as she would inform the family head and briskly headed toward the dojo.

Kousuke and Viare finished packing up and awaited the maid's return.

After twenty minutes, Shizuku and Nagare entered the room instead.

「To say you're already leaving, it's fine if you stay a bit long you know?」
(Nagare)

「We've received quite the hospitality already, we do not want to overstay our welcome. Also, the person we're waiting for should be arriving soon」(Kousuke)

「Oh, I recall you mentioning something like that when we were looking for an inn」(Nagare)

Recalling the events of yesterday, Nagare nodded.

「I understand. I will not hold you back then. At the very least though, please stay for lunch. Master wishes to bid you farewell after that」(Nagare)

「That much is fine」(Kousuke)

Feeling that it wasn't a big deal, Kousuke consented.

「By the way, Shizuku.... -chan? -sama? Ojousama? Why are you here?」
(Kousuke)

He asked while being unsure of how to address her. If it was just an invitation to lunch, Shizuku's presence would not be necessary.

「Isn't it a bit unwise calling a noble -chan? However, addressing her as Ojousama is passable」(Viare)

「Yes, as Viare-san stated, Ojousama is acceptable. As to why Shizuku-sama is here... Her training for today was concluded after the morning bout. Since her schedule for the day was opened, she came along in hopes of hearing some stories from you two. Shizuku-sama does not have much opportunity to leave the house and ended up growing up somewhat naive and ignorant of the outside world」(Nagare)

Shizuku hearing some interesting story was a part of it, but Nagare truly wanted more information about Kousuke.

Shizuku originally was only focused on training and held very little interest about everything else. She was constantly surrounded by strong family members and was satisfied with her training environment.

However, after being able to spar with someone strong from outside, it sparked her interest about the outside world, especially strong people.

At Nagare's request, Kousuke and Viare began talking about their day-to-day life as well as some things that happened on their journey.

Shizuku was listening quietly, showing a smile and happily nodding on occasion. It seemed like she was enjoying the stories.

Lunchtime came around quickly and the group moved to the dining room.

Since they're leaving immediately after lunch, Kousuke and Viare had their luggage with them.

The lunch was not Kohma cuisine, but of this continent's cuisine. It was absolutely delicious, it was easy to guess that the chefs were fired up with this meal.

When they finished lunch, Kousuke and Viare left the house.

Gen'ou, Shizuku and Nagare saw them out while the disciples, servants and maids were spectating from afar.

「Please come visit when you have the chance. We'll be here for the duration of the tournament」(Gen'ou)

「Is that so. I might come by one more time so that I may spar with Gen'ou-sama again. That is, if I can figure out a way to land a hit on you」(Kousuke)

「I'll look forward to it then」(Gen'ou)

「Let's spar again too!」(Shizuku)

Kousuke nodded back at Shizuku and Gen'ou.

Along with Viare, the two bowed toward Gen'ou's group before turning around to leave.

After three minutes of walking, Viare suddenly sighed as if all her tension vanished. It seemed that she was finally able to relax after leaving a noble's home.

Seeing her like this, Kousuke was lost whether to tell her that they're destination..... was the upper-class inn..... In the end, he didn't mention it. Viare's break was short-lived as her face grimaced and twitched as if recalling a nightmare.

Kousuke was unable to comfort her so he did the only thing he could do. He slowed his pace to delay their arrival as much as possible.

Chapter 24: Some battles cannot be won, ever.

In front of Kousuke and Viare's view is the adventurer's guild hall.

After the events at the Amasera dojo, the two leisurely spent a day at their inn and became bored and restless. Therefore, the two decided to head to the guild to alleviate their excess free time.

The scale of this city was much larger in comparison to St. Beria and the guild hall reflected that difference. The tournament being held here in the city may had some effect, but crowd here was also larger.

「You've always came as a tag-along, but is Viare registered as an adventurer?」(Kousuke)

「I am. All staff members are required to register」(Viare)

He thought she might need to register, but it seemed it was unnecessary.

Since St. Beria is considered the two's hometown, the guild hall there was aware of their circumstance. Kousuke was the only one accepting requests with Viare coming as a volunteer only. This way, even though they were considered a

duo, the reward for completion was only for Kousuke. It wouldn't be sensible to extort more from the clients and they were trusted to not "double-dip". However, this wasn't St. Beria so the two did not have to worry.

The guild hall here was unaware of the two's circumstance and Kousuke was worried about Viare's registration status.

「Well then, I guess you don't need to register here」(Kousuke)

The two entered the building and immediately approached the odd-job request board. Since they were only trying to kill some time, they overlooked all the requests that required them to leave the city. Either way, those quick and easy requests that required a light trip out of the city were all taken by the tournament contenders as a warm up preparation.

While staring at the board, Viare nodded once and spoke out what she decided.

「I'll choose something that I should be able to do」(Viare)

「Hm? We're not doing one together?」(Kousuke)

「Mm. I wanted to try going solo for once」(Viare)

If she did a request with Kousuke again she would end up relying on him too much, so she thought. To become more independent she pressured herself to confidently and successfully finish a request on her own.

She was confident in success actually. She intended to take on a similar request she's done in the past with Kousuke. It's better than doing something completely new since she would be likely to succeed and there would be less worries and doubts.

This was her first step to grow as a person.

Without explaining her real motives, Viare shrouded it by telling Kousuke that she's unable to keep up with the type of requests he takes. Telling him the truth? It was too embarrassing for her.

「This time around we're not in it for the money so I don't mind matching with your pace you know?」(Kousuke)

「You should pick something you like instead of worrying about me. I'm choosing one for myself for a reason」(Viare)

With the way the conversation was going it seemed like he would tag along so she tried to stop him.

「..... Then let's go with what you suggested. I hope we can find something suitable」(Kousuke)

「I hope so too」(Viare)

The two began skimming through the request board.

Kousuke searched for a request that he could learn something new from while Viare searched for an easy-to-complete one.

Viare's eye halted on a singular request.

「I think this one's good」(Viare)

The content of the request was for a nanny. Thanks to the tournament, the time people had to care for their children dwindled so the parents and guardians sought for temporary nannies and babysitters through the guild.

She was used to caring for children since she grew up in an orphanage. It was an excellent first choice for her.

「So you found one already? As for me... I think I'll give this one a shot」
(Kousuke)

The request Kousuke pointed out was from a sharpener. Rather than a request to sharpen something, due to the increase in business, the store required an extra helping hand organizing the sales and paperwork. There's no way a professional would allow an amateur take over his or her job just because they're busy though. There was also an additional requirement of being able to read and write attached to this request. It was crystal clear that the underlying implication of this was to have some experience in doing menial and routine duties.

The two confirmed the addresses of the requesters and went separate ways in front of the guild hall.

Fifteen minutes later, Kousuke arrived in front of the sharpener's store.

「Hello~」(Kousuke)

He greeted loudly as he entered, but found only an empty counter in front of him.

The shelf behind the counter was lined up with various blades that looked recently sharpened. It ranged from kitchen knives to swords and spear tips. The fully assembled weapons that were large like the full spear and axes were leaning against the wall beside the shelf.

「No one's in? Maybe someone's in the back...」(Kousuke)

Sucking in a deep breath, Kousuke gave a loud shout towards the back of the store.

「HELLOOO!」(Kousuke)

「Yes!! Coming!」(???)

With a few crashing and clattering sounds coming from the back of the store, a man dressed like a craftsman came out.

「Hey there! I was too focused on my work and didn't notice you coming in. Welcome to my store, Izazaki. Our motto is “Whatever the blade, we'll bring it back to perfection”! How may I help you today?」(???)

「I'm not a customer」(Kousuke)

「Not a customer? Then what business has brought you here? Are you possibly here for an apprenticeship? I'm too busy for that right now, wait until after the tournament's over」(???)

「I'm not here to apply as an apprentice! You requested some assistance through the guild, right? I'm here to fulfill that request」(Kousuke)

The man's expression was blank for an instant before he suddenly clapped his hands, as if recalling something. Seeing his reaction, Kousuke suddenly felt that the request was already fulfilled.

「OH! That request!」(???)

「Was the request already fulfilled?」(Kousuke)

At Kousuke's question, the man rapidly shook his hands in denial.

「No no! It's been a while since I set up the request so I just assumed that there was no one coming anymore. You're a lifesaver! I can finally focus solely on my work with your assistance!」(???)

「So is it safe to assume that I'm hired?」(Kousuke)

「Yup. Come with me behind the counter. I'll explain the details of your work」
(???)

At the man's beckoning, Kousuke followed him.

It wasn't visible from the front, but behind the counter was a table with a pile of paper on it and a small chair tucked under.

「I'm pretty sure it was written on the request, but just to clarify there are two things I need you to do. Handle the customers and organize the paperwork.

As for the paperwork themselves, it's calculating the revenues earned against the cost incurred. For the past twenty days, none of it has been calculated. Well, the payments and the date they were received were recorded so it shouldn't be too difficult to figure out.

Have this part finished by tomorrow and that part finished within five days. Everything should be wrapped up by then. Hope you can get up to that done.

I know it wasn't written as a requirement in the request, but can you do calculations? If it's too difficult you can just do the first part I pointed out earlier and call it. Even just having that done would help me a lot」(???)

「I'll be fine」(Kousuke)

From his explanation, the most Kousuke needed to know was some basic arithmetic. He nodded to himself that it'll be a breeze.

「Really? That's a relief. Alright, next is how to handle the customers. When

you accept the commission, please write down their name, the goods received, and the date received.

With regards to returning customers, please confirm their name and match their name to the goods in this shelf here before returning it to them. Everything that's neither a spear nor an axe will be placed over there. All the finished goods will be labeled with a tag so it should be easy to find. The charges are written on the tags too so make sure you get the money.

If any trouble comes up just yell towards the back of the store, someone will come out to help.

The request is for a week alright? It'll calm down after a week. I guess.. that's all for now, any questions?」(???)

After hearing the man's description of the tasks, Kousuke thought for a moment before speaking up.

「How should I record the monetary units? In Erte? Or should I just directly write copper and silver coins?」(Kousuke)

「As long as it's correct, it doesn't matter」(???)

「I'll stick with Erte then. If I have time I'll convert it into coins」(Kousuke)

「That's fine. Well then, good luck」(???)

「Ah, one moment. Can I ask for a small favor?」(Kousuke)

「A favor?」(???)

「When you have some time I would like to observe your work and possibly learn the basics for equipment maintenance」(Kousuke)

「I don't mind, it'll be during your break time though」(???)

With those words, the man disappeared into the back of the store.

Kousuke glanced around the store once more before psyching himself up.

「Let's take a look at this pile for now」(Kousuke)

Sitting down, Kousuke began rifling through the pile-o-documents.

Quickly counting, there seemed to be around 70 of them. The documents were organized from old to new, but the revenue and expense documents weren't separated.

While splitting up the pile, Kousuke felt a presence at the store's entrance. After placing a paper weight on the documents, he stood up to greet the customer.

「Welcome」(Kousuke)

「AHH!」(?!?)

The customer gasped in surprise since it seemed as though Kousuke suddenly appeared from behind the counter.

Kousuke tilted his head slightly, exasperated at the customer's reaction, but decided to not pursue it.

「Umm.. I wanted to get my spear you serviced...」(?!?)

「May I know the name it is registered under?」(Kousuke)

「Guinness. Guinness Fracht」(Guinness)

「Mr. Fracht then. Please wait a moment」(Kousuke)

Kousuke glanced at the tags on the three spears and pulled the corresponding one out.

「The balance is 2 silver coins」(Kousuke)

「Is this enough?」(Guinness)

The man placed two silver coins onto the counter.

「Yes. Here is your spear」(Kousuke)

「Mm」(Guinness)

The man carefully inspected the spear head and nodded in satisfaction.

「Thanks」(Guinness)

「Thank you for your patronage」(Kousuke)

As Kousuke raised his head, the man was already out the store.

「The money... I guess I place it in this box?」(Kousuke)

Kousuke picked up the two silver coins and tossed them into the box under the counter.

He quickly wrote down the customer's name, the item type serviced and the revenue amount into the journal on the counter. With this, everything related to that customer was recorded and ready to be filed.

While praising himself for a job well done, Kousuke returned to organizing the pile. He began his bookkeeping with the documents that were separated between expenses and revenue, with the oldest on top.

「I wish I had an electronic calculator...」(Kousuke)

Even if the calculations were simple, the sheer volume of it was daunting. Considering the fact that he needed to double check afterwards, Kousuke started to crave for a calculator.

Despite his initial whining, Kousuke was slowly increasing his work pace. Compared to his original life on Earth, his current mental aptitude was abnormally high and even if he works leisurely, the originally five days' worth of work felt like a day's worth instead.

While handling the occasional customers and the documents, night came. Physically and mentally he felt no fatigue since the workload was very simple.

During the times a difficult customer came, another store employee took over so he didn't have to struggle.

「I'm closing up so you're done for the day」(???)

The man from the back called out to Kousuke who was seemingly having a staring contest with the documents. The two spoke a bit during lunch break and Kousuke found out that the man is apparently called Corundum.

During their lunch break conversation, Kousuke learned some basics on maintaining his sword.

He found out that various types of whetstones needed to be used when sharpening weapons.

Even blades that could be considered works of art, even if the process can be considered only slightly complicated, the use of just one type of whetstone was far from enough.

From the beginning Kousuke knew this, but he was a bit dissatisfied finding out that he's not capable enough currently to completely self-maintain his weapons. Possibly after a month's worth of arduous study and training he might be able to. However, this was almost impossible since none of the craftsmen

have time to solely train Kousuke.

Understanding his circumstance, during his employment here Kousuke felt that it would be most satisfactory if he could learn how to check for abnormalities in his weapons as well as attain some knowledge on how to clean and properly oil his weapons.

「Mnnnn!」(Kousuke)

Kousuke stretched out his body, placed the documents down and stood up.

「Around what time should I come in tomorrow?」(Kousuke)

「Before the two bell tolls」(Corundum)

In this city, the first bell signifies 6 in the morning while the two rings signify 9 in the morning.

「Got it. Well then, I'll head out for the day」(Kousuke)

「Thank you for today」(Corundum)

Even after closing the store, the staff continued working and Corundum scurried back into the back room.

Upon leaving, Kousuke noticed a myriad of people, who similarly just finished working, walking around the street.

Blending into the crowd, Kousuke returned back to the inn. When he opened the room's door he saw Viare, who finished work earlier, fiddling with her identification card.

「Oh, Welcome home~」(Viare)

「Thanks. You finished first, I see」(Kousuke)

「Mm. They didn't need me to stay until closing」(Viare)

The request Viare took up only required her to assist with handling the children during the peak hours.

Even if she stayed until the end, it's restricted to 8PM. Part-timers like Viare are ideal for employers with a tight budget since getting any full-timer was unfeasible for them currently.

While waiting for dinner time, the two discussed each other's day.

For the allotted time contracted by the request, Kousuke dutifully completed his tasks without issue.

He earned three silver coins and as an added bonus, a few whetstones for knives. Unfortunately, the whetstones were only useful for knives used in cooking and skinning that are easy to maintain and sharpen. He also managed to get some practice with weapon maintenance and sharpening so it could be said that he earned more than the stated reward.

As for Viare, since she was motivated and the work involved was what she was experienced in, no big problems came up. It wasn't completely trouble-less though as she was caught up in some turmoil involving a merchant's inheritance, but the person herself never seemed to notice this.

Unlike Kousuke, Viare's request required her to work daily and lacked a specified end-date so it was decided that even if it exceeded Kousuke's request's timeframe that both of them would continue working.

While Kousuke and Viare were leisurely going on day-by-day, Alice was finishing up her task in Ricardo.

「Well then, let's proceed with what we agreed upon」(Alice)

「Understood, please leave this to me」(???)

The person sitting across from Alice is the contracted architect.

「May I know the estimated completion time?」(Alice)

「Let's see..... It's not as large as a noble's mansion, but definitely larger than a commoner's home.. so around half a year I suppose」(Architect)

「The same as before I see, I understand. Thank you in advance for this」(Alice)

The new home Alice wanted constructed was an apartment capable of housing around four families. With sturdiness as the highest priority combined with the size of the home, the price was definitely high but Alice still had more than enough funds left after selling off a dragon scale.

The scale was sold through an old acquaintance of Alice, the Guildmaster of Ricardo's Adventurer's Guild. Before she left for Vesamika a month ago, Alice passed him the dragon scale. The Guildmaster knew someone that was interested in purchasing a dragon scale so it was convenient for Alice to sell it through him.

The dragon scale was purchased for over a hundred flash coins. The preparation of such a vast fortune took some time so she finally received it earlier today. Using the reward money received from the ancient clan, combined with the profits earned from the dragon scale, the commission for the house was immediately funded to the point of exaggeration.

Coincidentally, the two met because the Guildmaster wanted to pass a letter to Alice.

The sender of the letter: Alice from the past.

The contents of the letter was brief, just one sentence, but with that one sentence, Alice was able to recall an incredibly important memory.

However, that's a story for another time.

「The construction site is still the previously selected suburban area correct?」
(Architect)

「Yes. Once it's complete, I'll shrink and carry it away with magic」(Alice)

「Lastly, please confirm that there are no issues with the contract here」
(Architect)

Alice began reading the contents of the contract.

Scrutinizing every detail, she confirmed there were no errors and returned the contract.

「Since everything is settled for today, I'll take my leave. I'll take a look at the progress in around three months' time」(Alice)

「Thank you. I look forward to our next meeting」(Architect)

The man bowed deeply towards Alice as she left the store.

「I guess I have nothing left to do in Ricardo」(Alice)

Standing outside the architect's office, Alice nodded to herself as she confirmed the tasks at hand.

「Now then, time to head to where Kousuke and Viare are」(Alice)

After heading out of Ricardo, Alice casted the teleportation spell twice before arriving at the borders of Rezotikumog.

Since the distance was too long, she couldn't teleport there in one shot. The requirements were simply too high so the only beings that were currently capable of instant teleportation anywhere in one go were gods and certain spiritual beings. Alice has the potential, if she solely trains her magic for twenty years through harsh combat. Despite being slightly tempted, Alice shrugged slightly and tried to content herself with her current abilities.

「Hmm, now where are those two right now...」(Alice)

Spreading out her detection magic, Alice began searching throughout the city for Kousuke and Viare. To put it simply, the magic is just like a sonar, emitting a magical pulse out to grasp the position of familiar auras. Since it's used to find specified targets, the effective range was quite large, roughly a week's worth of walking distance.

「Hmm? This aura is...」(Alice)

Alice glanced away from the city the moment she picked up a different aura. She ended up detecting Borudosu's aura outside the city as well.

He and his group was around six days away from the city.

「Maybe I should drop by a bit later」(Alice)

Glancing towards Borudosu's direction once more, Alice turned around and headed into the city.

Standing in front of a store, Alice spread the detection magic once more before entering.

「Welco... Wait ALICE!?!」(Kousuke)

Kousuke exclaimed loudly suddenly seeing Alice.

「Have you been doing well?」(Alice)

「I'm fine, I'm fine, but how did you find me here?」(Kousuke)

「I have a magic for finding people. It seems like you're currently working」
(Alice)

「Yea. I had some time before the tournament so I figured I might as well work a bit」(Kousuke)

「I see. I'm sure I'll be a bother if I continue talking here. Can you tell me which

inn you're staying at? I'll wait for you there」(Alice)

Kousuke nodded and explained the inn's name and location to Alice.

「If my memory serves me, that's a high-class inn, is it not?」(Alice)

「That's right. The other inns were pretty much filled so we ended up there」
(Kousuke)

「Do you have any money left? Were you two just barely holding out until I arrived?」(Alice)

Recalling the dismal state of Kousuke and Viare's finance, Alice couldn't help but worry .

「Are you working because you need money for the inn?」(Alice)

「Nope, it's really just to kill some time. I have enough money for the inn too. I was able to earn ten flash coins earlier」(Kousuke)

「Wait just a moment, it's not neither easy nor simple to earn a fortune of ten flash coins. What exactly did you two do while I wasn't around? Never mind, just tell me later」(Alice)

Hearing his sudden fortune, Alice felt cold sweat trickle down her back. She really wanted to interrogate him, but she reconsidered. She didn't want to cause a disturbance in a public location.

「I'll head to the inn now」(Alice)

「Su.. sure.... I'm pretty sure Viare should be there already」(Kousuke)

「I see. I'll just talk with Viare about this then. I'm looking forward to finding out what exactly you did to get that money」(Alice)

Alice was smiling brightly, but it thoroughly rattled Kousuke. Even if it wasn't directed at them, a few of the other customers nearby felt the chills.

Alice left and Kousuke felt his courage waning as the store was about to close. However, time couldn't be stopped and the day eventually came to an end. Kousuke got up to leave, but felt only increasing dread in his heart.

Today was the last day of the request, but he couldn't feel anything positive at the moment. The other employees could only confusedly stare at Kousuke's unusual behavior.

「I'm back....」(Kousuke)

Kousuke unintentionally muttered his return as he opened the door, only to see the smiling Alice in the room. Behind her was a cowering Viare.

「Welcome back, it seems that you were veeery busy in my absence」(Alice)

Hearing her emotion-less words, Kousuke backed slightly.

「Umm.. which part are you talking about?」(Kousuke)

「Let's see, how about when you invented a new game.. AND when you somehow became acquainted with the Rubidashia household」(Alice)

「..... You're going to ignore the kidnapping part?」(Kousuke)

「You're an adventurer, such occurrences aren't uncommon in that line of work. I have nothing to say about your sleuthing and heroic activities.

Two problems.... One, your actions were very pronounced. Two, Your. Actions. Were. Very. Pronounced. Definitely two problems, you agree right?」
(Alice)

Alice paused, taking this opportunity to glare at the ever shrinking Kousuke, before continuing.

「You were destroying all my efforts to prevent your information from leaking out to troublesome groups」(Alice)

Alice just barely managed to keep the ancient clan at bay, only to find out upon re-grouping that there were two huge events propagated by Kousuke. Asking her to not get furious was impossible.

In truth though, Alice wasn't mad, yet.. but she felt extremely upset at his blunders.

「If you want to sell your name to the world please just say so, I'll put my

efforts toward that direction as well」(Alice)

「But I don't intend on doing that though」(Kousuke)

「Then be more prudent」(Alice)

「Um.. That.. Mm.. Sorry... Could you hear out my explanation?」(Kousuke)

「You mean excuses? Fine, go ahead」(Alice)

「I never thought that among the kidnapped children, a noble's child would be mixed in. Can I use that in my defense?」(Kousuke)

「Well... That is somewhat reasonable....」(Alice)

She sighed once before continuing.

「Just be more careful from now on alright?」(Alice)

「I'll try to be careful」(Kousuke)

Kousuke couldn't acquiesce completely as the future was unforeseeable.

Understanding this point, Alice decided in her heart that she would just follow up when he needs it. Compared to the past Alice, this decision of her's was very pampering, but Kousuke and Viare had no way of knowing this. It was much later in the future that the two found out about how much Alice has changed.

「Tomorrow, come with me to the Merchant's Guild. Got it?」(Alice)

「I won't disagree, but could I know why?」(Kousuke)

「To keep them quiet」(Alice)

The game "Othello" Kousuke provided was something anyone can play. Since anyone can pick it up then everyone will know of Kousuke's existence.

The board and chips need to be crafted and since it's likely to be well received and a large amount of money would begin circulating for the production and sales. This vast fortune, a portion of it will go to Kousuke. Even if the percentage is small, once this is sold throughout the world the amount that goes to Kousuke would be an astronomical figure. And where the money flows, people with ulterior motive will appear. Many would try to pick at his brain to produce more ideas, or attempt at his or his close one's life for the money.

This situation.. is the complete opposite of what Kousuke wanted. Therefore, the two needed to “encourage” the Merchant’s Guild to enact a gag order.

Despite it being a few days already, information travelled somewhat slowly in this world so it was still not too late.

「I hope you understand」(Alice)

After she explained the reason for the information suppression, Kousuke and Viare could only nod their heads quickly.

Moreover, Alice wished for the Rubidashia household to cooperate as well.

Their fame extended throughout the world, with many disciples of theirs spread throughout the continents, as well as many from around the world crowding over to their dojos to become disciples. Their connections were not limited to just those committed to the martial arts, but were also intertwined with the nobility and royal families. Since their influence was so widespread, it was highly likely some information about Kousuke would leak. If someone like Gen’ou, whose abilities are beyond the norm, speak of Kousuke with high praise to others...

It’ll clearly impact the livelihood of Kousuke and all those close to him. By all

means necessary, Alice wanted to prevent this.

However, Alice lacked the necessary connections within Kohma and the Rubidashia household. Even if Alice forcefully tried to suppress the information, another rumor about a powerful witch trying to cover up for someone will spread instead.

Thus, Alice could only cross her fingers and pray, hoping that the Rubidashia household will keep quiet of their own volition.

「My head hurts...」(Alice)

Alice slumped over slightly while rubbing her temples. Meanwhile, the perpetrators of this situation could only awkwardly smile.

It was only after they relaxed a bit in silence with some tea that the atmosphere in the room lightened up slightly.

Since the two's situation were already divulged, Alice began to explain everything that happened on her end. Slowly, time turned and dinnertime came about.

Chapter 25: Congratulations Kousuke, you get to participate after all!

Kousuke groggily got up from his bed and changed his clothes before heading out of his room. Sensing no movements in Viare and Alice's rooms, Kousuke figured the two were still asleep.

Straightening his clothes, Kousuke strode out and headed to the kitchen to make some breakfast. The inn employed chefs to prepare the meals for the guest, but he figured it would be more enjoyable making it himself.

Any of the guests can request for ingredients from the kitchen. As long as the requested amount isn't excessive, the inn doesn't charge for the ingredients since it's treated as the included meal from the rent.

Though he was somewhat upbeat, the real reason for cooking himself is for Alice. After she stayed at the inn for three days she got sick of their food so she asked Kousuke if he could make something different.

Reaching the kitchen, he was immediately surrounded by the scent of food. The chefs were already preparing the meals. While listening to the sounds of vegetables being cut and the sizzling of the frying pans, Kousuke approached one of the maids cleaning the tables.

「Good morning. Mind if I can get some ingredients?」(Kousuke)

「Good morning, sir. Which particular ones are you interested in?」(Maid1)

「Sliced bread, jam and some butter. Also, some lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes and vinaigrette dressing. Hmm, and some eggs and thinly sliced ham. Please prepare three people's worth」(Kousuke)

He decided to keep things simple with toast, salad and some fried egg n'ham. Since the two ladies had a "small stomach" in the morning, he felt this was enough.

After confirming the order once more, the maid promptly headed to the kitchen's interior. She returned with a pushcart filled with the ingredients.

「Is everything here satisfactory?」(Maid1)

「Yes, thank you very much」(Kousuke)

「The kitchen space reserved for guest use is located in the room besides the dining area.

Once you are done, please lightly clean the tools and have them placed inside the cart in the guest's kitchen.

After your meal, the same rules apply to the dishes and utensils used」(Maid1)

「I understand, thank you」(Kousuke)

Giving his thanks, Kousuke immediately headed to the guest's kitchen to begin cooking.

If anyone experienced were to see his culinary skills, they would be impressed since he looked so young. Kousuke's movements were just that fluid and masterful.

Despite this, his only experience cooking consistently in this world was at Alice's home. He just improved rapidly... Thanks to his cheat-like learning capabilities.

Furthermore, Alice and Horun pushed the cooking duty to Kousuke more often as he improved. His culinary skills surpassed Horun's before he left for St. Beria with Borudosu and was infinitely close to Alice's. He's still far from being a first class chef, but he can easily overwhelm a third rate establishment.

chopchop the rhythmic sound of the knife evenly slicing vegetables resounded throughout the kitchen. Kousuke tasted the vinaigrette dressing and poured some into two containers before adjusting one of them with seasonings. He even cooked one of the eggs differently.

Since he only knew about Alice's preference, he cooked and seasoned for hers separately but kept Viare's the same as his since he didn't know hers.

Kousuke was in a really good mood though since he could clearly see his skills improved again.

「Finished~」(Kousuke)

He placed the food onto a tray and quickly cleans the cooking tools.

Upon his return, he noticed the two were still asleep so the living room was quiet.

He decided to wake up Viare up since she had to work later. Getting no response after knocking three times, Kousuke tensed slightly before opening the door.

「Good morning~」(Kousuke)

Kousuke greeted as he entered and saw some movement under the blanket.

While squirming under the blanket, Viare finally responded.

「Wah? Kousuke-san?」(Viare)

「It's morning already so it's time to get up. I made breakfast already」
(Kousuke)

「It's morning...? ... Ah.. Good morning」(Viare)

「Mm」(Kousuke)

After telling her to come to the living room, he left her room.

He stood in front of Alice's room and got no response again so he also went into her room.

She didn't respond even after calling out to her so he shook her awake.

「Good morning」(Kousuke)

「Mmm.... It's morning already?」(Alice)

「Yup. I made breakfast for everyone so please wake up」(Kousuke)

「... Oh.. that's right, I asked you to. I'll be up soon」(Alice)

After heading out of Alice's room, Kousuke finally relaxed. 【TL: For those confused, he's basically invading a girl's room, which explains him tensing up and feeling nervous】

Viare was still in her pajamas, pouring a drink for everyone in the living room. It looked like she woke up completely after washing her face.

「The seat with the seasoned dressing is Alice's by the way. Make sure you don't eat that one」(Kousuke)

「Okay~」(Viare)

Alice, who finished washing up, came into the living room, sat down at her seat, gave her prayers, and then began eating.

「Delicious」(Alice)

She leaked out the compliment when she tasted the salad since it fitted her preference perfectly.

「You haven't been slacking, I see」(Alice)

「I guess so. I'm glad that it tastes good.

How about you Viare? Do you want it sweeter or saltier? I'll try to match it for next time」(Kousuke)

「I'm pretty satisfied. If I had to be nit-picky, then I think I'd like a milder flavor?」(Viare)

「Mild, got it got it」(Kousuke)

Kousuke bit into his apple jam toast as he memorized Viare's taste.

He completely ignored Viare's muttering about how much better he is at cooking than her.

Twenty minutes after breakfast was finished, Viare, who needed to work, and Kousuke, who needed to return the dishes, left the room together. With the exception of working at the sharpener's store, Kousuke had nothing else to do. Alice placed him under house arrest to keep him from causing any more trouble.

As compensation, Alice taught him more about magic and about the world so

he didn't feel too stifled.

「Have a safe trip」(Kousuke)

「Mm, I'm off」(Viare)

After seeing Viare off, Kousuke headed to the kitchen to return the dishes. On his way back to his room his feet suddenly stopped as he spotted Nagare in front of him.

Noticing his presence, Nagare lightly bowed and approached him.

「Good morning」(Nagare)

「Good morning to you too. Is there something you need?」(Kousuke)

「Yes, a small favor if you would」(Nagare)

「Let's not discuss this here. Let's continue this in my room」(Kousuke)

Giving consideration to Alice, Kousuke suggested to continue their conversation back in his room.

「May I know who this is?」(Alice)

Glancing at the entrance when the two entered, Alice asked upon seeing an unknown woman with Kousuke.

「She's the attendant of the noble's child. I mentioned about her, she's Nagare-san」(Kousuke)

「Ah, you certainly did mention her. A pleasure to make your acquaintance, I'm Alicia. Kousuke's my disciple」(Alice) 【TL: For those who forgot, Alice is a nickname】

Upon hearing her name, Nagare showed a slight reaction. Alice's name is quite famous, there's no way Nagare would not know of her. However, Alice's age doesn't match her appearance and there were too many unknown factors so Nagare concluded that she just had the same name.

「The pleasure is mine, I'm called Nagare. Young miss has been in Kousuke-kun's care」(Nagare)

「I've heard the details already. Well, talking at the entrance is a bit bothersome so please come in」(Alice)

「Then I'll be troubling you」(Nagare)

Alice took a seat and asked Kousuke to prepare some tea. She prompted Nagare to have a seat and the two began to chat. Alice's tone was vastly different from her usual self. Once Kousuke brought back the tea for everyone, the three got to the main topic.

「So you came to visit Kousuke today?」(Alice)

「I wished to ask him for a small favor」(Nagare)

「.....A small favor, I see. Could you further indulge us?」(Alice)

「I hoped he would participate in the tournament, under special conditions」
(Nagare)

Alice slowly placed her cup down after hearing this.

「Please explain further, and why under special conditions?」(Alice)

「This may sound blunt but I believed that Kousuke would definitely participate in the tournament.

However, upon investigating the contestants enrolled for my master, his name did not appear」(Nagare)

「Of course his name won't appear. He did not come to this city as a contestant but as a part of the audience」(Alice)

Hearing something that naturally fitted Kousuke's disposition, Nagare gave a wry smile.

「With his abilities, it can be easily assumed he would participate.

Therefore, everyone was looking forward to his participation in the tournament.

When I reported to my master about my findings, he kept demanding for Kousuke-kun's participation」(Nagare)

「I see, so that is why you're here」(Alice)

「Yes. I came hoping to change his mind.

We've already handled the discussion with the tournament organizers. We only require your permission to proceed with the rest」(Nagare)

Seeing Kousuke's unenthusiastic expression, Nagare muttered "Is this no good?",

Her actions were not meant to seem compulsory, in fact even if he did refuse there would be no repercussions. It'll only give her a slight headache when she has to deal with the Father-daughter pair.

However, to everyone's surprise, Alice spoke up in an accepting tone.

「By special conditions, what exactly are they?」(Alice)

「Waived from the qualifiers and his participation begins when there are 64 contestants remaining」(Nagare)

The contestants would engage in a one-vs-one duels when only 64 of them remain. Prior to that, each round is a 10-way free-for-all.

「..... I will allow it under a few conditions」(Alice)

「What conditions?」(Nagare)

Kousuke couldn't open his mouth at this sudden development. Despite his shock, he kept quiet as he figured Alice had something in mind.

「Your household must keep other's from finding out about Kousuke.

This includes not only during the tournament but also afterwards as well. Especially keep silent around nobles, royalties and others of high influence.

Have this written down as an oath and leave it with me.

If this can be met and maintained, Kousuke may participate since neither he nor I wish to stand out」(Alice)

Hearing Nagare's request, Alice wanted to take advantage of the situation to silence the Rubidashia household. Since she lacked the necessary influence around the Rubidashia household, for them to come to her was a miraculous occurrence.

In fact, just keeping quiet about Kousuke is nothing for the Rubidashia household. This is because the existence known as Kousuke is deemed neither beneficial nor disadvantageous for them.

「Am I required to produce an immediate answer to your condition?」(Nagare)

「No, decide after discussing with your master」(Alice)

「Understood, I'll take my leave for today then」(Nagare)

Nagare stood up and gave a light bow before heading to the entrance.

She suddenly halted and turned around. Her expression showed that she suddenly recalled an important detail.

「I understand that you wish for us to keep a low profile about Kousuke, but wouldn't his participation in the tournament be the opposite of that?

The tournament staff, contestants and the audience, we cannot expect their silence so is there a countermeasure in mind?」(Nagare)

「I've already taught Kousuke a disguising magic. He simply needs to use that and enroll with a false name.

For your side, being able to watch him fight is enough, correct?」(Alice)

「That is... certainly correct」(Nagare)

「In that case, your side should be satisfied as long as I provide the appearance and name he will use」(Alice)

「I understand, I shall deliver this information」(Nagare)

With that concluded, Nagare finally left the room.

As a matter of fact, Nagare already deduced that they would use a disguise. She only asked in a “curious” manner to gain more information on just how developed their disguising abilities were.

However, Alice saw through her ploy but still openly revealed it. There was simply no need to hide it since she was originally going to reveal it to them.

「Make sure you participate since it's already like this」(Alice)

「I really want to refuse though....」(Kousuke)

「Bear with it since it's to completely settle the issues YOU caused in this city」
(Alice)

Despite it being the truth, Kousuke still felt a bit wronged.

He eventually agreed to participate and the two began discussing about the appearance of the disguise.

Their immediate thought was Ride Hero. Having already learned some superficial magic to mimic the appearance of Ride Hero's super techniques, on top of being an interesting character, they agreed to use it as the disguise.

Viare, upon her return, was shocked hearing the news about Kousuke's plan to enter the tournament. His adamant attitude of not participating was

suddenly overturned, it'll be a wonder if she wasn't shocked.

After listening to Alice's explanation for his sudden change of heart, Viare looked towards Kousuke with eyes filled with sympathy.

The following day, Nagare returned stating the acceptance of Alice's conditions. The deal was finalized with Kousuke's alias being added into the tournament roster.

The official document to abide by the conditions signed by Gen'ou personally would later be delivered and guarded by the guilds. Prior to this, neither party is obligated to follow the conditions.

... And soon, the first day of the tournament arrived.

The city became flooded with people. Among the torrent of people, not all were heading to the arena.

With the use of projection magic, those who decided against going to the arena due to disliking crowds or only watching for the fun of it could enjoy it too. Just think of it as something like a limited-time television.

The biggest downside, however, is that this magic is limited to the visual aspects only. Despite not being able to replicate the audio, the largeness of the projection gave it a strong enough impact for the audience.

The ones entering the arena were fans of watching raw fights.

Kousuke and co. were mixed in with the arena crowd. Since Kousuke's participation was guaranteed, Gen'ou provided Alice and Viare VIP seat tickets as well.

His debut would begin from the third day of the tournament so Kousuke was also given a VIP ticket for the first two days.

The arena before them was permeating ancientness filled with an unfathomable history. According to Alice, this place had to be constantly repaired and maintained for the tournaments. However, it was smaller than a baseball stadium and the Coliseum on Earth was also bigger. If all the seats and standing areas were filled, 30,000 occupants was probably the limit.

After buying some refreshments, the three headed toward their reserved seats.

Their seats were separated from the other reserved seats, with the best front and center view of the stage.

As for the special rooms in the upper area of the arena, those were specifically reserved for the upper nobility and royalty.

「This kind of thing is a first for me」(Viare)

Viare was curiously looking around her like a child.

「I've experienced this quite a few times. Mmm, still though, it's been around ten years since I watched though」(Alice)

「I think I only experienced this once before?」(Kousuke)

Kousuke overlapped his current experience with Earth's pro baseball game. Even if the events are different the sensation and excitement felt the same.

The three waited in anticipation for around thirty minutes when a gong resounded loudly throughout the arena and beyond, signaling the start of the tournament.

On the stage, a few people suddenly appeared. Among them, Gen'ou was there.

An announcement suddenly sounded from an unknown source.

「An announcement from the tournament administrator」(???)

The audience quickly quieted down.

The elderly man signaled the mage behind him to cast a volume increasing spell before speaking.

「I hereby declare the start of the martial arts tournament!」(Administrator?)

In under ten seconds the elderly man finished and quickly stepped back.

The arena was quickly filled with applause and shouts of joy.

Once the audience calmed down, another announcement was heard.

「The return of the championship pennant, our previous tournament's champion,

Sir Ritai Muzetsu, ENTER!」(Announcer)

In accordance to the announcer, a man in his mid-20s holding a small flag walked onto the stage and handed the flag to the administrator.

Upon receiving the flag, the administrator and Ritai began discussing something, but no one else could hear them.

At the announcer's urging, the group on stage left before he continued with the important facts of the tournament.

To summarize:

Killing is disallowed. In the case that someone is killed, if deemed an accident, no penalties will be applied. However, if the assailant's assault is deemed to be either in excess or filled with killing intent, he/she will be judged accordingly.

A loss is determined by someone giving up, falling unconscious or landing outside the boundaries of the stage. Going too far from the boundaries will also be deemed as a loss, therefore flying is also prohibited.

All contestants are free to choose their weapons, however, in the case of

damaged or destroyed equipment, the owner may not demand remuneration from the opponent.

The same applies to injuries since the tournament organizer has arranged for healers to provide treatment, free of charge.

With the rules explained, the announcer also stated that the first round of the first match will begin soon.

「The entrants are getting on the stage now it seems. The round should be starting soon」(Alice)

The gates around the stage opened and ten warriors stepped out onto the stage while keeping some distance from each other.

「Umm, is everyone ready?」(???)

A different voice from the announcer asked the contestants on stage.

To which all nodded in affirmation. With this the announcer shouted the start of the match.

「First match of the preliminary round..... BEGIN!」(Announcer)

Simultaneous to the announcement, all ten contestants moved. Each and every one moved with respect to their thoughts.

A few charging headfirst towards their closest opponent, two that began to use magic, one person that retreated to the edge to see how things play out, a few that stayed immobile while staying vigilant, *etc.*

In the end, the victor went to the warrior who retreated first. A brilliant use of calm observation and energy preservation lead to victory.

The next round was similar to the first and ended in around twenty minutes. There were only two instances where a round ended in under ten minutes.

Those were contrary to what Kousuke expected. Seemingly impossible moves, trained through gifts and years of combat, were displayed flashily. It was like an action movie and thoroughly entertained him. Going above and beyond Kousuke's expectations, this tournament suddenly became a fountain of knowledge for him. Just from observing his strength was increasing.

「I wonder when it's Borudosu's turn」(Kousuke)

「We didn't overlook him, did we?」(Viare)

「Your worries are unfounded. I wouldn't miss him even if he tried to hide」
(Alice)

—————

They actually already met with Borudosu earlier.

When he came into town, Alice “tracked” him and the three gave a surprise

visit.

The dumbfounded look on his face when they arrived was priceless. His face became even more twisted in shock as they discussed what transpired the past few weeks.

Borudosu came to the city with a few friends as well. Among them, Clarice was also present. Her “reason” was because she was interested in seeing the tournament. She left her cousin to take care of the store.

Peering at the rest of his crew, Kousuke noticed there was another woman dressed as an adventurer among them. Putting two and two together, he guessed she was the other who fell for Borudosu. After being introduced to her, it became concrete but surprisingly, she was not participating in the tournament.

Once those two “lovers” heard that Alice was Borudosu’s foster mother, they became stiff for the rest of the visit.

When Borudosu asked Kousuke if he was participating, after hesitating for a brief moment, Kousuke shook his head. Just in case, he decided to keep it a secret from Borudosu as well since others were around.

The intermission ended and the tournament resumed. After an hour, Borudosu’s figure finally appeared on stage.

「Ah, there he is」(Kousuke)

「Where?」(Viare)

Kousuke pointed at Borudosu's figure on stage for Viare.

Borudosu has yet to see the three of them though. Despite how easy to find they were, he never dreamed that they would be seated in the VIP area, so he didn't even look around. They tried to call for him, but the three's voices were drowned out by the audience.

「Well then, let's see if he'll last until the end」(Alice)

Alice smiled excitedly as she impatiently awaited for the round to begin.

Borudosu was wielding his favorite axe. To adhere to the tournament rules, he blunted the edge with a special cover. Still though, with his strength, breaking a bone or two would still be a breeze.

The round began.

Borudosu immediately dashed toward the nearest opponent. He clashed violently against the opponent and immediately knocked him unconscious before rapidly finding another target.

This group didn't have any abnormals, so after a while only Borudosu and a mage was left in a 1v1 situation.

The finale of this round was: Borudosu charging valiantly at the mage while

enduring the various bolts of spells pelting him. In the end, the mage couldn't stop his charge and was shoulder tackled off the stage.

With this, Borudosu safely advanced to the second rounds of the preliminaries.

His appearance seemed slightly haggard as he exited the stage.

「I'm glad Borudosu-san won」(Viare)

「Mm」(Kousuke)

「He did alright, but at this rate he'll lose sooner or later」(Alice)

「Is it really impossible for him to win?」(Viare)

Viare asked back.

「Well, he can't beat Kousuke」(Alice)

「Ah, that's true」(Viare)

「It's a different story if he got a trump card while he was travelling though」
(Alice)

Alice was convinced that it won't be like that though. With their long relationship, there's no way Borudosu's strength would be overlooked by her.

「I can say he did well only if he manages to win his way to the top 64 and manages to win at least one of the matches」(Alice)

「Even though he's strong.. it's only good if he manages just up to there?」
(Viare)

「He's in a handicapped situation since he can't use his gift」(Alice)

His gift will make him unrestrained, unfortunately. He'll be able to perform at his peak, but more likely than not he'll end up killing with that uncontrolled strength. Since this tournament punishes murder, it's easy to conclude that this gift of his is taboo.

His decision to participate despite the disadvantage was because the prizes for the top 64 and to get a clearer picture of where his current strength stands.

Also, as an adventurer, it's a form of prestige just by getting into the top 64.

While Alice was explaining the two about why Borudosu was entering, the next match began.

One match after another proceeded and the first day of the tournament finally came to a conclusion.

Seeing the audience leaving, the three followed the crowd out.

They listened to the clamors of the crowd. Excited chatters of the best fights,

groans and cheers from the gamblers, there was not one person among them that stayed quiet.

Even as the night grew, the crowd wouldn't disappear until the guards forcefully dispersed them.

The following day, the three got their refreshments once again before heading to their seats.

The matches were still the same 10 people free-for-all, but all the contestants were more riled up.

The more hot-blooded the fights, the more the audience cheered.

Borudosu also managed to win his matches today. His opponents were stronger than yesterday so he looked even more battered after today.

Just like the rest of the contestants, he received treatment for his wounds. Kousuke hoped that Borudosu would be well rested for tomorrow's matches.

And the third day of the tournament arrived.

「I'll be heading out first」(Kousuke)

「We'll see you there!」(Viare)

「Make sure you disguise yourself before you arrive there. Take care to not reveal your identity or where you're staying too」(Alice)

「Roger that」(Kousuke)

Kousuke nodded before heading out the inn with everything he needed.

On his way to the arena, he slipped into an empty alley before changing into Ride Hero. Just in case, he covered himself with an illusory robe before heading back onto the streets. 【TL: You sound like a flasher】

Kousuke approached the soldier guarding the entrance for contestants and presented his invitation.

Seeing his shrouded appearance, the soldiers were vigilant at first but after confirming the authenticity of the invitation they allowed Kousuke to pass without any issue.

Once inside, Kousuke was immediately led to a private waiting room and was asked to relax until the matches begin. While Kousuke was enjoying the tea and snacks left for him in the room, a knock from the door was heard.

When Kousuke said “come in”, two figures entered.

「Lady Shizuku and Ms. Nagare? To what do I owe this visit?」(Kousuke)

「Sorry for the sudden intrusion, but we're just here to see how you were. It seems you're already in your disguise」(Nagare)

At first, Nagare was suspicious and cautious due to his shrouded features, but relaxed when she heard his voice.

「I didn't want to leave any tracks」(Kousuke)

「Can I see what your disguise looks like under that robe?」(Shizuku)

Shizuku briskly trotted over to Kousuke and tried to peel off the hood of the robe. To her disbelief, her hands slipped right through them.

「The entire robe's an illusion. I'll remove it」(Kousuke)

Kousuke dispelled the robe portion of his disguise.

The two were surprised when a complete stranger appeared from under the robe.

The most shocking was the mask Kousuke was wearing as the design was completely foreign to them.

「Was the design of your disguise your original creation?」(Nagare)

「If it's completely original?」(Kousuke)

To his response, Nagare nodded.

「No, it's not. This appearance is from a hero from my hometown. He protected the weak and innocent from various monstrous beings and eventually destroyed their nests, bringing peace to my home」(Kousuke)

「I'm a little surprised since I've never seen or heard anything like this hero, especially since it stands out」(Nagare)

「If you recognized this, I would be more shocked」(Kousuke)

「Is there any specific merits attached to this appearance?」(Shizuku)

「Nope. This entire thing is an illusion too. I'll be incorporating some small, special "magic" during my matches. It's mostly just to make things look a bit flashy, since in the end I'm just fighting unarmed」(Kousuke)

While giving an understanding nod, Shizuku was patting all over Kousuke's disguise.

She thought her hands would go through and touch his actual appearance underneath, but was startled when her hands landed on the disguise.

「The magic for this portion of the disguise is a bit unique so it can trick the other senses」(Kousuke)

If, during the matches, the illusory disguise on him was found out by others, it would draw in unwanted suspicion. A case where the opponent realizing the sensation after being hit by Kousuke's fist was not a glove, but a direct hand was one such possibility. In any case, there was no reason not to take extra precautions so he used the more advanced illusion magic.

With the purpose of their visit finished, the two scurried out of the room to get back to their seats.

Thirty minutes later, a tournament staff came to Kousuke's room.

She froze in place upon seeing the unrobed figure in the room. After a brief moment she regained her composure and asked for Kousuke to follow her out.

After dropping Kousuke off near the exit to the arena, she immediately dashed off to the closest co-worker to gossip about the weird contestant.

The rest of the surviving contestants were waiting nearby and had their eyes glued to Kousuke's presence.

They were not shocked nor amazed by his unusual appearance, but the fact that he was here among the top 64 despite never being in the previous matches. His attire was simply too unique for anyone to forget. They were obviously not content with this person's sudden appearance.

Borudosu, however, gave Kousuke a peculiar look as if it was familiar. Then it suddenly hit him, it's Ride Hero! It made his head spin more upon this realization.

『Why is a hero from a fairy tale here?!』thought Borudosu.

During and prior to the play, Borudosu never found out about Kousuke's involvement in it and never imagined it would be Kousuke himself.

While Kousuke “tried” to ignore the stabbing gazes, an announcement from outside was heard.

「We shall begin the tournament placement lottery!

The following matches will be held between the remaining 62 contestants and the two seeded contestants, totaling 64.

The order the contestants will go up to fight will depend on what lottery number they draw.

Please give a round of applause to the brave warriors!!!」(Announcer)

The crowd went into a thunderous applause.

The contestants all crowded out onto the arena. Even now the audience were applauding loudly, but some were suddenly shocked.

The cause was Kousuke. Just like the contestants, the audiences were unsettled by his sudden appearance as well.

Ignoring the questioning looks of the audience, the announcer was discussing the rules of the lottery to the contestants.

「When your name is called, please draw one slip from the box here.

The order I will be using is based on when you first had a match during this tournament. Therefore, the two seeded individuals will be called last as they have not fought yet.

Now then, first up, the lion beastkin hailing from the southern continent, Kris!

Despite not having a gift, using his innate prowess as a lion beastkin he easily won his matches. His mastery over the short spear cannot be overlooked as his opponents from the first and second rounds were unable to avoid them! His spear arts are something all should be wary of!」(Announcer)

While the lion beastkin man was drawing the lottery, the announcer continued introducing the rest of the contestants.

To assist the audience, the announcer continued to briefly divulge some details about the contestants. In fact, the other contestants were listening carefully as well. Every detail about the other contestants were crucial since each and every one of them are strong.

One after another was announced and finally Borudosu's turn came.

「Next contestant is from the Eastern continents!

Due to the rules of the tournament, he has been suppressing the use of his gift as it would endanger the lives of his opponents. However, despite this handicap he has managed to win his way up to this point!

How far can he go with such a handicap, we shall find out soon!」(Announcer)

Hearing this, various people within the crowd were amazed.

The announcer continued to ignore the crowd's reaction and resumed his announcing.

Finally, the 62 contestants were done drawing and the remaining two seeded players were left.

「Announcing the first seeded contestant! Will this tournament become a part of this man's legacy?! Once again, the warrior everyone knows, the conqueror of the previous tournament! SIR RITAI MUZETSU!

Who among our contestants will be able to topple this impregnable fortress!? Even I must say I'm excited to see such a development!」(Announcer)

Not only the announcer, but the audience were drawn into a frenzy with this introduction. Ritai approached the box and slowly pulled out a slip.

Currently, there was only two blank spots left. One as Borudosu's opponent and the other is a swordsman using a different style from the Amasera dojo.

Borudosu felt that the other seeded opponent would be easier to handle compared to Ritai and was praying Ritai wouldn't go his way. Regardless of which seeded contestant he gets, Borudosu had no idea that both would lead to a severe fight for him.

Ritai raised the slip into the air to display to everyone and his name appeared

on the tournament board. His opponent was Borudosu.

Seeing this, Borudosu paled as he blankly stared at the board. It was over 90% likely he would lose now.

Alice was laughing at Borudosu's terrible luck. 【TL: WOW ALICE! That's your son】

「The final contestant!

We introduce the mysterious warrior!」(Announcer)

It was finally Kousuke's turn and the crowd turned quiet. There were some that were quietly discussing the nature of this mysterious contestant.

「Introducing, Ride One. Origin, age, real name, gender, all information is unknown!

The only confirmed detail we have is that this contestant was recommended directly by the Rubidashia household's patriarch!

With this, we can all assume this person has that much potential. I am eager to see Ride One's performance in the coming matches!」(Announcer)

The appearance Kousuke gave off just standing there made him look dignified to the rest.

Being directly recommended by Gen'ou, the rest of the contestants became increasingly wary of Kousuke and the audiences were in an uproar at the sudden appearance of a strong dark horse.

Only Ritai was staring at Kousuke in an amused fashion. His eyes were gleaming hungrily

『Finally, someone worth fighting』(Ritai)

Chapter 26: UNLEASHED! RIDE KICK!

With an announcement, only two contestants who drew the first match slip were left on the arena.

Kousuke's turn, even if the preceding matches were concluded quickly, wouldn't begin until late afternoon.

Since he could watch the matches from his waiting room, he decided to go back. The tournament staff even had his meals prepared so he had no reason to stay anywhere else.

When he got back to the room, the first match had already began.

The two on stage was a tall man with a "Mana Absorption" gift and a limber individual with the "Greater Agility" gift.

The tall man's gift allowed him to absorb mana around him, including other people's when they try to utilize magic. However, to completely nullify another person's magic, this gift needs to be trained up to at least the 3rd stage. Anything prior would simply reduce the effectiveness of the incoming spells.

The "Greater Agility" gift not only improves the user's speed and reaction, but also their thought process speed. The 1st stage of this gift improves the physical agility of the user by 5% and they can think 3x faster than a normal person. In the final stages of this gift, the physical improvement jumps to 20% and the user can think 10x faster than a normal person.

The match quickly ended with the agility gift user's win. He pressured his opponent heavily without using magic so it made his opponent's gift useless.

In fact, another contributing factor to the agility gift user's victory was the announcer's previous divulging of the other contestants' information.

The next set of matches proceeded smoothly and, with the end of the afternoon intermission, Kousuke's turn approached.

Prior to the break was Borudosu's match with Ritai, with Ritai as the victor. Borudosu was reckless throughout the match, constantly trying to land full powered blows against Ritai. In response, Ritai ignored Borudosu's attacks and immediately crushed him.

The equipment Ritai wore was a steel breast plate and a leather glove and shin guard, plated with thin sheets of iron. Seeing how they weren't even dented despite Borudosu's onslaught, it was clear that Ritai is a gift user or the equipment's were enchanted.

「Finally, the unveiling of this tournament's mystery shall begin! Ride One and Shayden, ENTER!」(Announcer)

The two appeared onto the stage at the announcer's call and faced each other.

The crowd was brimming with excitement. They can finally see the mysterious Ride One in action!

「I'll be no better than a dog who wished to be a wolf if I lose this match. Henceforth, this wolf shall unveil how much of a dog you truly are」(Shayden)

With a snap Shayden arrogantly pointed at Kousuke and announced.

His voice didn't reach the audience, but from his actions the audience knew he was goading Ride One. Many started to cheer for Shayden after this.

Compared to Shayden, Kousuke stayed silent and motioned his right hand in a "Bring IT" fashion.

「The fight hasn't even started and the two are provoking each other already! I'm sure not just these two but the rest of us want this to start, so without further ado!!! Ride versus Shayden, ready... BEGIN!」(Announcer)

The first to move at the announcer's signal was Kousuke.

『Let's test him a bit with a light punch』(Kousuke)

The light punch of Kousuke's was only in his perspective. In the eyes of the audience and other contestants, its speed and power was most likely the highest they've seen yet.

However, Shayden slightly shifted his body and dodged it. The follow-up kick was gracefully dodged with a back step as well.

「Striking at the speed of light, contestant Ride, and the man gracefully dodging them, contestant Shayden! Just how will things develop from here!!」
(Announcer)

Ignoring the announcer's sudden outburst, Kousuke continued his assault. The fruits of his labor, Kousuke was skillfully weaving direct and feinted attacks. But even those were being avoided by Shayden. It was unclear if that was all he could muster in this situation, but even now Shayden has never attacked.

Kousuke felt something was amiss and thought.

『Is this his gift of future prediction, his so called “Clairvoyance”?』(Kousuke)

This information was also divulged by the announcer.

However, the details of the gift were obscure so Kousuke did not slow down to gather more information.

What he figured out so far was that Shayden was dodging after seeing the incoming attack and was not dodging because he could see the future.

It was evident when Kousuke first attacked since Shayden was in motion the moment AFTER Kousuke took a step forward. He was responding to certain subtle motions, like line of sight, weight shifting, *etc.* before moving.

Taking the information received from his gift, processing it and responding in accordance to the results shown before him, this explained why Kousuke's attacks and feints weren't working.

There was one more crucial detail he found. From the audience and announcer's perspective, Shayden looked calm and composed, but Kousuke who was closer could clearly see the strained look due to extreme concentration reflected on Shayden's face.

『I'm sure if I go any faster he'll be unable to dodge.. Let's find out』(Kousuke)

Kousuke experimented with a slight increase in his speed and lo and behold, his punch left a scratch on Shayden's armor.

Since his hypothesis was proven correct, Kousuke smiled and decided to proceed with his plan.

He stopped his onslaught and leapt away from Shayden. Unable to respond, Shayden could only watch Kousuke leap away.

If Shayden's gift was a true clairvoyance then he might have been able to counterattack there, but the true nature of his gift was an improvement to his senses and reflexes which made it seem like he can see the future. He predicted that Kousuke would back away, but could not understand the reason for it. This, in the end, just made him much more tense.

At this juncture, Shayden took this opportunity to gather as much information as possible.

Underneath his illusory mask, Kousuke's mouth moved. He took an unusual pose, but small balls of lights were gathering around his right leg.

The announcer did not overlook this.

「Light is gathering around Ride's leg!! Is he about to unleash a big move?!」
(Announcer)

The gathering light was, in fact, just an illusion and has absolutely zero combat use.

However, Shayden came to the same conclusion as the announcer and plunged toward Kousuke to stop him.

Kousuke leapt into the sky to avoid him. As he reached the peak of his jump, the light gathering around his leg began to shine brilliantly.

The blue balls of light around his right leg began to swirl around him, making it seem like his move was about to be unleashed. In a daze, the audience was enthralled at the brilliance.

Upon landing, with the fastest speed yet, Kousuke launched a jump kick towards Shayden.

Underneath the illusory mask, Kousuke muttered "Ride Kick".

Unable to dodge, Shayden cleanly took the kick to his chest.

At that moment, blinding light enveloped the entire arena, followed by a loud explosion and an enormous amount of smoke covered the two. All of this was just Kousuke's SFX.

This caused the entire audience to become sullenly quiet.

Then suddenly, they saw Shayden fly out of the stage, clearly unconscious.

「Me.. MEDICAL TEAM! Confirm Shayden's condition!」(Announcer)

First to snap back, the announcer immediately called to confirm Shayden's wellbeing.

With the announcer's shouting the audience also woke up and began to clamor more and more nervously.

With what Kousuke displayed, everyone thought he killed Shayden. Clearly.. He overdid his little "show".

The medical team rushed over to Shayden. Confirming the presence of breathing and a pulse, the medical team gave the announcer the results.

Hearing them, the announcer's sigh of relief resounded throughout the arena.

「I shall announce the results. Besides some signs of fractures in the ribs, Shayden's condition is not life threatening! Therefore, the winner of this match is Ride!」(Announcer)

The audience went into a huge uproar of cheers and applause.

Everyone finally acknowledged the recommendation Kousuke received and were trembling in excitement.

Kousuke pumped his fist into the air in response to the avid cheering. He decided he'll go with the Ride Punch in his next match as he walked back to his room.

The following matches proceeded smoothly and the official first round of the tournament ended.

The most memorable match of the day, was without a doubt, Kousuke's match. There were other interesting matches with the elusive elf, Sylph, or beastmen vs lycanthropists, but the impact of Kousuke's Ride Kick blew all of those out of the water.

Incidentally, Alice asked what kind of technique Kousuke used when he got

back to the inn. When he explained that it was just a simple jump kick with some superficial effects, she rolled her eyes at him.

The following day was Kousuke's 2nd and 3rd matches, but he claimed victory with absolute ease.

His second opponent had the gift "Physique Control" and the third opponent was a dual-wielding high goblin. Compared to the small statured goblins, the high goblin was two meters tall.

The "Physique Control" gift allowed the opponent to manipulate his body movement at will. As the gift is developed, the user is able to ignore the limitations caused by their joints, inertia and even gravity to a great extent. However, this gift doesn't negate any bodily burdens so the wild, reckless use of it is equivalent to being suicidal.

This opponent attacked Kousuke with little regards to his own safety. On the other hand, as Kousuke observed this, he responded by mimicking, albeit not perfectly, the opponent's reckless moves. With the match becoming an enticing acrobatic show, the audience were thoroughly enraptured.

The third match against the high goblin, Kousuke effortlessly dodged all of his attacks and when an opening presented itself, Kousuke charged in and threw the high goblin off stage with one hand.

At first glance, the third match was somewhat bland, but it showed that Kousuke was not only fast, but also wielded incredible strength.

The next day was the last day of the tournament.

Kousuke's fourth match was against an Amasera swordsman with the "Simplicity" gift. He fainted with a Ride Kick before shrouding the stage with a smoke screen. While the opponent was blinded, he smashed the swordsman with a fist wrapped in illusion and launched him off stage with a Ride Punch.

The swordsman's gift was an interesting one where it literally simplified certain actions. One use for it would be to negate the necessary incantations for spells. Unfortunately, there has been no records of anyone fully mastering this gift, so the exact details of it are obscure.

This swordsman did not fully master his gift, but he definitely had some great attainment in its use. Whenever he slashed, certain muscle motions were omitted and he was freely changing his defensive and offensive tempo.

His skills could be considered high, but in front of Kousuke it presented little threat and all his attacks were not dodged, but directly blocked.

With the matches so far, Kousuke quickly became the crowd's favorite for the championship as he held the trifecta of a warrior: Power to overturn all obstacles, speed to confront any situation, and the necessary steadfastness to endure all oppositions.

The Semifinal. The most anticipated match of this tournament was about to begin:

Ride vs Ritai.

As both contestants entered the stage, the crowd fell silent, awaiting for the match to begin.

Ritai grinned devilishly as he stared at Kousuke. It couldn't be helped, he was simply too excited about this match.

「The moment we have all been waiting for has arrived! Both the audience and I believe this match will exceed even the finals of this tournament!

I happened to overhear the bet ratio: it is close to 50/50. Though slight, the scale leans more towards Ritai becoming the champion once again!

Ladies and gentlemen of the audience, are you ready! Warriors, are you ready!

With this, I announce the start of the semi-final match, Ride vs Ritai...」
(Announcer)

The announcer paused briefly as he took in a deep breath, filled with anticipation.

「3! 2! 1! BEGIN!」(Announcer)

The first to move was Kousuke. Ritai stayed composedly in place, just like all his previous matches.

Kousuke's fist plunged straight towards Ritai's chest. Ritai immediately raised his arms in a cross-guard fashion. Learning from Borudosu's match with Ritai, Kousuke did not hold back his punch.

The simple flesh on flesh impact of the punch released an unbelievable shockwave. To these two, that shockwave signaled the true start of the match.

After a brief pause, Kousuke resumed his offense with a flurry of punches. Ritai continued his defensive stance, blocking, dodging and parrying those blows. Under normal circumstances, even if none of the strikes were decisive, damage would pile up into something noticeable.

However, Ritai's grinning complexion was unperturbed.

「You surprised me. I'm actually feeling a little pain for once」(Ritai)

In a serene voice, Ritai spoke indifferently.

『Does his gift negate physical based attacks on his body?』(Kousuke)

To test this, Kousuke leapt away in attempts to use magic.

Ritai gave no chase and resumed staying in place.

Feeling that a long-ranged attack was unsuitable as Ride One, Kousuke decided to use a little trick to smash some magic into Ritai. Despite being unlike his normal self, Kousuke was too excited to care about having any restraint.

He quickly gripped his right fist and pointed it to the sky. Using his left hand, he gripped over his right fist and slid the left hand down to the elbow to gesture that he's about to use a special move. In a low voice, he completes the incantation for a fireball and evoked it around his right fist. His fire fist was complete!

He thought it would burn his hand, since it was his first time doing this, but it was just a bit hot instead, like an overheated bath. Contrary to his thoughts, the temperature of the fire was enough to burn people to a crisp, but his tolerance

to the elements was simply too high.

『Here comes my blazing fist of justice, Burning Ride Punch!』(Kousuke)

【TL: Raw said Irregular Ride Punch.. but Burning sounded better 😊】

Seeing the vigorous strike approaching, Ritai steadied his footing and raised his arm in a cross-guard fashion once again.

The flame on the burning fist enveloped the two with a burst and slowly started to fade.

Seeing the unchanged expression on Ritai underneath the flame, Kousuke was taken aback to see that even magic was ineffective.

After all this time, the only thing Kousuke could conclude about Ritai's gift was that it was defense-oriented.

『Is my only choice to go full force against this person?』(Kousuke)

He separated once more from Ritai and rapidly tried to think of a plan.

Taking advantage of Kousuke's opening, Ritai charged forward and swung his brutish sword in a flurry. With a blunted edge and an enormous body, his sword looked like a giant club instead.

Of the opponents Ritai faced so far, none had a good fate once his sword appeared. The sheer weight of the sword along with the momentum of the swing, most would crumple under such force. Even if someone was able to withstand the blow, they would end up leaving a huge opening.

Ritai's fighting style can be summed up as such: "Allow for the flesh to be cut to break their bones", a purely offensive style. 【TL: 肉を斬らせて骨を断つ, a proverb that sounds awful in English, but it literally means to attack with the intent to win, even if it means you're harmed in the process – A "Winner Takes All" kind of thing】

Kousuke was unable to fully avoid the flurry and received a few on his body.

『Hmm, his offensive ability doesn't seem to be too great. I guess it's just his defense that's difficult to deal with』(Kousuke)

Deflecting the incoming strike toward his left shoulder, Kousuke immediately

took a step forward and sent a palm strike toward Ritai's chest.

There was no damage, but it killed Ritai's momentum and forced him back.

A stronger strike would have left some lingering damage, but that wouldn't be fun for him or the crowd. Kousuke didn't realize he was in full "hero show mode" despite it only being a disguise.

Mistaking the unusual action of Kousuke staring at his hand as shock, Ritai opened his mouth and suddenly began explaining his gift.

「Normal attacks can't hurt me you know since my gift is "Damage Reduction". Regardless of its source, all damage I take can be reduced. I'm pretty sure only your shining kick from your first match can actually hurt me」(Ritai)

Ritai's gift already raised his defensive capabilities to an unbelievable level, but he further suppresses the inflicted damage by actively blocking them.

He only explained everything since the only way to overcome it is to have enough strength in this situation. If they were fighting without any rules, then traps or poisons could be used.

「Come at me with that kick, I'll meet it with a suitable skill. It's something I developed to use against the Rubidashia household's patriarch, never imagined I would be using it here like this」(Ritai)

『I don't mind playing by your rules, but I'll make sure you play your role in my show well』(Kousuke)

【TL: Wow.. you're really into this aren't you Kou-chan】

Kousuke took up a stance as he gathered the illusory light around his right leg. Ritai gripped his sword with both hands as he kept the blade pointing down. His mouth began moving, preparing an unknown spell.

Both of them took a step forward.

Kousuke launched forward and unleashed his jump kick. Ritai dashed forward slightly before swinging his sword up. While the blade was in motion, an explosion appeared behind Ritai causing him to fly forward like a bullet. A rocket propulsion method made possible with his gift.

『RIDE KICK!』(Kousuke)

「TRUE STRIKE!」(Ritai) 【TL: Sounds awful in English. Raw is: One Blade Big

Slash】

The two's attack immediately clashed, releasing an incredible shockwave followed by a blinding flash and smoke.

From within the cloud of smoke, Kousuke's body flew out and crashed onto the ground.

Ritai's figure immediately dashed out from the smoke, charging towards Kousuke. With a swing of his blade, Ritai sent Kousuke flying once more onto the edge of the arena.

Both the audience and Ritai thought that Kousuke was about to lose. Contrary to their thoughts, Kousuke was left largely unharmed. Gen'ou's "God Slayer" was actually more painful.

He only "lost" this clash to make his comeback even more memorable for the crowd.

Seeing Kousuke wobbly stand up, Ritai charged forward to finish the match.

「A rush, a rush! The table has turned in favor of Ritai! Ride is somehow hanging on, but will the match be ending soon!? Or will he make a comeback!?!」
(Announcer)

【TL: Yea, a really corny one】

The announcer excitedly dictated the situation.

Kousuke continued to stall by “barely” dodging and stumbling around the stage. Feeling the timing was right, he took a small distance from Ritai before propelling himself with gust magic at Ritai.

Seeing the sudden charge of the “fatigued” Kousuke, Ritai stopped his feet and took up a defensive stance.

「You’re finally going all out! I shall accept your bet and withstand it once again! My victory is assured! COME!」(Ritai)

Being unable to discern that everything has been an act, Ritai misinterpreted Kousuke’s action as his last ditch effort.

Seeing how readily baited Ritai was, Kousuke grinned under his illusory mask and evoked a completely new illusion around himself.

「This?! A TIGER?!?! There's a face of a tiger on Ride's legs! Is this his biggest move yet?!

Furthermore, the light is wrapped around both his leg and are red instead of blue!」(Announcer)

Using the flight magic, Kousuke leapt high into the sky. At the peak of his “jump”, Kousuke began to plummet while spiraling towards Ritai.

At the tip of his extended right leg, a bright red sash was spiraling alongside his body making him seem like a human drill.

「It's a tornado! A red tornado is spiraling towards Ritai at the speed of light!」
(Announcer)

『I present the HURRICANE RIDE KICK!』(Kousuke) 【TL: Damn it Kou-chan...】

Feeling the pressure released by the approaching light, Ritai had cold sweat coat his back from his hasty decision.

In an instant, Kousuke's spiraling kick landed onto Ritai's arm.

Without stopping his spiraling, Kousuke's kick was slowly pushing back Ritai, whose face displayed a struggling expression.

Kousuke stopped spiraling after around 10 seconds and the light around his right leg vanished.

「I endured! I BLOCKED IT!」(Ritai)

He roared while relishing the immense pain he hasn't experienced in such a long time.

The audience, seeing the "final" blow being blocked, felt that Kousuke's loss was imminent.

As if betraying their thoughts, Kousuke, using Ritai's arm as a spring, leapt up into the sky once more.

『I prepared something for just this case!』(Kousuke)

「Ride has once again taken flight! Was that not his final attack!?!」(Announcer)

Kousuke suddenly began somersaulting towards Ritai.

「Is this possibly...!?!」(Announcer)

The announcer shouted at the sudden development, as if understanding what will occur.

『RIDE AXE KICK!』(Kousuke)

「IT IS! It's an axe kick!」(Announcer)

With the left leg still wrapped with light, the axe kick dropped heavily down onto Ritai's shoulder.

With a gust of wind, the dust cloud surrounding the two was erased and the scene of Kousuke standing over a collapsed Ritai was revealed.

With his muffler fluttering in the wind, a picturesque moment of triumphing over a great ordeal was encapsulated into the hearts of many in the audience.

Although Ritai successfully blocked the first strike, albeit with some damage taken, the second strike was something he could no longer withstand.

「Confirm their conditions!」(Announcer)

After not seeing any movement from Ritai for 10 seconds, the announcer shouted for the referee to confirm the conditions of both contestants.

After briefly checking Kousuke, the referee asked Kousuke to stand a small distance away as he checked Ritai's body.

As he stood up, he waved his hand indicating that Ritai was completely unconscious.

「It's finished! The results are in! The champion is.. wait no, the winner of this match is Ride!」(Announcer)

The audience exploded into an applause, greater than anything before.

Even though the announcer almost made a mistake, the crowd wouldn't refute it even if he said that Kousuke would be champion. There were those among the crowd that wanted to see further upsets in the tournament, but they were a tiny minority.

The final was supposed to begin after an hour and half break..... it was supposed to, but the opponent forfeited and Kousuke became the champion.

After seeing the match between Ritai and Ride, he knew he couldn't defeat either of them. But that's simply with the current setting, he vowed to train even harder so that he can face them next time around.

His choice to withdraw was not criticized by the audience since they agreed that those two were simply too strong for the rest.

With his victory over Ritai, the name Ride would eventually be spread throughout the entire Karuhode continent.

In the near future, when the Tale of Rider spread throughout Karuhode and Sebushik continents, many speculations that Ride from the tournament and the traveling troupe's play were the one and the same from the tale.

The awards ceremony began the moment Ritai regained his consciousness.

On the arena, Kousuke, Ritai, the finalist who forfeited, the other semi-finalist that lost, and the tournament organizers were lined up.

The elderly gentleman among them was handing out the prizes to each while giving them words of encouragement. From first to fourth place, the prizes handed to them was 5 flash coins, 3 flash coins, 1 flash coin and 5 gold coins respectively.

To the rest of the top 64, including Borudosu, were given a consolation prize of 1 gold coin.

Kousuke was also holding onto the championship pennant. Luckily, he doesn't have to carry it around afterwards since they'll take it back.

With the ceremony over, Kousuke thought that he could head back to the inn but was asked by the tournament organizers along with the other contestants to join the celebratory feast.

『I wonder if it's a good idea joining this. Rejecting it seems rude to the

Rubidashia household... but accepting it will give me an unavoidable headache, probably?』(Kousuke)

While pondering what to do, he hurriedly excused himself to the bathroom to remove his disguise and rushed to where Alice and the rest were seated.

The announcer's voice could be heard advising those leaving the city to be careful. The details of the announcement was as follows: There lies a monster's nest, 1 day east of the city where a Rafdewum queen took root. Please refrain from traveling out of the city until the situation is under control.

A Rafdewum is a sub-species of the earthworm monster Kousuke encountered when he was at the ruins, protecting Viare's brother. The former is carnivorous, but the current monster follows the earthworm diet of dirt. While the earthworms are beneficial to the soil, the Rafdewum's will completely devour the nutrients of the land and are labeled as pests to be removed.

This queen, compared to the rest of its brood, is 7 meters long with 4 heads and 2 tails. It's infamous for its unbelievable tenacity. In the past, a 6-headed, 5-tailed queen decimated an entire city once.

As the announcement ended, Kousuke bumped into Alice and Viare on the way to their seats. The two were planning on heading back to the inn and wait

for Kousuke's return.

「Ah, Kousuke-san! You were amazing!」(Viare)

「Is something wrong? You seem a bit rushed」(Alice)

To avoid unwanted eavesdroppers, Kousuke led the two off to the side.

He immediately went straight to the point and asked for their opinion about the feast.

Alice pondered for a moment before speaking.

「Join them, but come back quickly. You should be able to save the Rubidashia household some face by doing that. It would be best if you do not speak at all during the party, but if you must, mask it with the “Strange Voice” spell」(Alice)

「Got it. Alright then, I'll head back to the waiting room」(Kousuke)

「Please wait a moment. Are you injured at all? I just want to make sure」
(Viare)

Though she was taught beforehand from Alice that everything was an act, nevertheless, Viare couldn't help but worry.

To alleviate her worries he smiled and told her he only got some scratches. When he separated from the two, he disguised himself once more in an abandoned hallway before returning to the waiting room.

「Ah, Ride-san」(???)

When he reached his waiting room, a tournament staff that quickly shifted from a worried look to an alleviated one was there.

「The rest are gathering to leave soon, please follow me」(???)

Kousuke nodded and followed after the staff.

Reaching outside, there waited several carriages for the contestants and tournament organizers to ride.

After the staff led Kousuke to a particular carriage, she asked him to wait for a moment before she stepped away. The carriages won't depart until everyone was gathered, it seemed.

It didn't take long for the rest to be gathered, but in that short amount of time, there were many that gathered to see Kousuke. By the time they departed, the crowd made it difficult for the carriages to leave. 【TL: Oh my, my Kou-chan is so popular ;D】

None in the crowd approached him, possibly due to being nervous, but they would point at him and whisper something to each other. Despite understanding their reactions, it still irritated Kousuke a bit.

The carriage travelled gently. After a short while, they arrived at their destination of the district representative's mansion. 【TL: Something like a mayor or a neighborhood leader】

The party's location was in the large front yard of the mansion. There were many tables laid out filled with various foods and drinks. The preparation was done in advance during the morning, in case the tournament ended earlier like it did today.

There were many guests besides those from the tournament in the yard. While some discussed the events of the tournament, there were some that

were scouting and recruiting promising individuals.

Borudosu was also enjoying the party. Since he lost during the first round of the top 64 matches, there was less attention on him during the party so he was enjoying it in a carefree manner.

There were a few instances people tried to talk with Kousuke, but he quickly refused. So far, none tried to recruit him. The reason being they all assumed that he was already a part of the Rubidashia household. However, this didn't mean that there weren't many that wanted to pull him to their side.

After eating his fill, Kousuke began his search for Gen'ou and Nagare. He wanted to at least say a word with them before leaving to not seem rude.

Scanning the party without moving from his spot, Kousuke immediately found Gen'ou discussing something with another noble while Shizuku and Nagare quietly stood beside him.

「Ride-san」(Nagare)

Seeing the approaching Kousuke, Nagare called out to him while bringing along Shizuku.

The noble speaking with Gen'ou glanced at Kousuke for a brief moment

before looking back towards Gen'ou.

「Thank you for your hard work today. Also, congratulations on becoming the champion, I never doubted that you would win. Still, your unconventional methods were something that surprised us all」(Nagare)

「I fought in a fun way, for both the audience and myself」(Kousuke)

In hindsight, it was clear he never considered his opponent's feelings.

「It was amazing!」(Shizuku)

Shizuku laughed happily as she was thoroughly entertained with Kousuke's matches.

Seeing her bright expression, Kousuke smiled in satisfaction. However, his illusory mask hid it.

Still though, the kind of entertainment fighting he displayed would be

considered sub-par or unbearable for someone who took combat seriously.

「I won't be staying until the end of this party. Sorry if it's sudden, but I plan on leaving in a short while」(Kousuke)

「That's unfortunate... Never mind, this is for the best」(Nagare)

Considering the other party's disposition, Nagare had no choice but to agree.

「I guess this is farewell then. I'm not sure when we'll be able to see each other again」(Kousuke)

「We won't see each other again?」(Shizuku)

「It's not impossible to see each other again, but it'll be difficult」(Kousuke)

「Then let's wait patiently for our reunion in two years when another tournament is held, ojou-sama」(Nagare)

At Nagare's words, Kousuke tilted his head apprehensively.

【TL: The raw said Shizuku said the last line.. Probably a typo since it makes NO sense if she said “ojou-sama” to Nagare...】

「The next tournament? I don't think I'll be participating」(Kousuke)

「Eh? You're not?」(Nagare)

Nagare stared with a blank expression. She expected him to join once more with a disguise.

「My original purpose for coming here wasn't to fight in the tournament to begin with. I wanted to just watch, but after enjoying it thoroughly enough this time around I doubt I'll do it again」(Kousuke)

「Is.. Is that so... Then meeting again would be difficult...」(Nagare)

「Well, I plan on visiting Kohma at least once so we'll probably see each other then」(Kousuke)

「You'll really visit Kohma?」(Shizuku)

Towards Shizuku's inquiry, Kousuke nodded.

Hearing this, Shizuku pulled out a piece of cloth. It was a beautiful, soft purple cloth with a white flower petal embroidered on one corner.

「Then please accept this. It's a handkerchief with the Rubidashia household's emblem. Present this along with my name to the gatekeepers of our house when you visit, they'll lead you in without any issues」(Shizuku)

Upon closer inspection, the center of the handkerchief revealed a light purple emblem.

「I'm not sure when I'll be visiting so are you sure?」(Kousuke)

「Yes, please accept this」(Shizuku)

【TL: Kou-chan, watch out, it's a marriage proposal hidden under this!!!】

「Then I'll accept it as a loan for now」(Kousuke)

【TL: NOOO YOU FELL FOR IT!!!】

With his goal accomplished, Kousuke greeted Gen'ou before heading back to the tables to get one last bite to eat then return to the inn.

While eating the freshly prepared food, one of the tournament organizers was talking to him about the matches, but it didn't really register into Kousuke's memory.

Seeing an opportunity, other nobles and contestants tried to talk to him, but he hurriedly refused them.

After eating his fill once again, Kousuke left the party quietly.

However, there were a few that followed him in secret. With so many people around him before, it was difficult to tell, but once he separated from the crowd the presence of these individuals became alarmingly apparent.

Kousuke quickly hid himself into a dark alley way. He picked up a pebble and chucked it toward another alley to lure them away.

One of the men following him heard the pebble and quickly entered the wrong alley.

Seeing this, another man followed after into the wrong alley. There were a few more presences around Kousuke that did not follow the two previous men.

Kousuke considered trailing after those men to confirm their purpose, but decided against it in the end and prepared to teleport away. Removing his disguise and walking back would probably still arouse some suspicions so he decided to teleport back to the inn.

Being unable to even find a shadow of Kousuke, the men determined they completely lost sight of him and left.

In truth, those men were spies that nobles hired to gain as much information about Ride as possible.

With absolutely no leads, the nobles were only left with the knowledge that a mysterious and strong individual exists. This was reported to the kings and leaders of the country they hailed from.

The following morning, Kousuke, Alice and Viare bade their farewell to Borudosu, who was going to participate in the Rafdewum extermination with his group. The three got onto a southbound carriage and left the city out the eastern gates.

【TL: Don't question the direction, literally what the raw stated】

While taking a scenic route, the trio's destination was for a port city that can ferry them to the Sebushik continent.

Chapter 27: The events during their travel

RattleClattleRattleClattle the carriage rocked noisily. It's already been 12 days since the three departed from Rezotikumog.

They've already transferred to different carriages three times. The twelve days weren't only uneventful carriage rides as the three stopped at various towns and cities along the way.

Riding together with the three was a bespectacled man in his 20s and a merchant lugging along his merchandises. The former is named Stad and the latter is named Chinton.

After riding together for three days, those two became friendly enough to converse with the trio. What more could they do? Long carriage rides are strenuous and boring so their only reprieve was in the form of human interaction.

「So Stad is currently studying to become a government official」(Kousuke)

「Yup. I'm currently returning since I picked up the corresponding materials for the third exam. Once I pass the third and fourth exam, I can become a government official」(Stad)

A slightly exaggerated scene of Stad carrying his goods lovingly could be seen.

「The third exam, I see. The only place that would be holding such a thing is the Zerupia Kingdom, correct?」(Alice)

「That is precisely so」(Stad)

At Alice's inquiry, Stad gave an enthusiastic nod.

「Wow, that's amazing Stad-san. It's a little surprising since you look more adventurous than studious」(Chinton)

“You can't judge a book by its cover”, it was exactly so as Chinton admired Stad's goals.

Stad gave a wry smile, as if used to hearing such statements.

「So exactly what must you do for Zerupia's government exam?」(Chinton)

「It's held once every 3 years and it can take up to a year to finish. The exam involves a test on knowledge, etiquette, dynamism or the ability to take action, and inventiveness. A certain level in each is expected of those working in the government, at least that is what those in Zerupia believe.

The topics themselves do not change, but the contents of the examination never repeats from one year to the next. It can be a fight between the examinees, or they demand the examinees to multiply the given money by X, or they may just give some oral or written exams.

Their irregular testing method is a way to gauge the worth of the potential candidates.

Anyone who can successfully clear through everything within the first four months can become a government official. By anyone, it pertains to the entire populace, even those that are not of the nobility.

A rarity, correct?」(Alice)

「Really? Where I'm from, it was common knowledge that anyone can become a part of the government, even commoners. It just required some effort」
(Kousuke)

For Kousuke, who grew up in a country where the social standings of an individual did not matter, seeing people becoming limited or endowed due to their birthrights left a sense of incongruity in him.

「It seems it's quite different from where you're from」(Alice)

「Where I'm from, only the nobles held government positions」(Viare)

At Viare's comment, Chinton nodded in agreement.

「There have been some rumors that none have passed the exam in these recent years, is that true? I also heard that even though this person didn't finish within the 4 months, he was still accepted」(Stad)

Stad asked Alice, in hopes of relieving the doubts he had about the exam and his future.

「From what I can remember, there was a man who successfully completed all of the exams perfectly approximately 20 years ago. Other than him, I haven't heard of anyone else passing in a similar fashion.

By the way, the man in question is the current prime minister of Zerupia and he's apparently the third son of a merchant household. Since he couldn't inherit the household, he took the exam on a whim and managed to perfectly pass」
(Alice)

It was a surprise even for the prime minister then since he simply wanted to gauge his current bearings. In the end, he left such a record in history and immediately became a part of the elites. Even now, he would lecture his colleagues and subordinates that the future is unpredictable and everyone should give it their all.

「If someone is able to produce a similar results they'll likely be accepted, even if it exceeds the 4 months' time limit. Well, his case was a bit special to begin with」(Alice)

「Are you from Zerupia?」(Stad)

「No, I'm not」(Alice)

Stad asked as he was dumbfounded that Alice knew more about his country than he did.

「You're quite well informed I see」(Stad)

「Just some knowledge among a few of my friends」(Alice)

And also the fact that she's lived a very long life.

「What was the exam like this time around? Since it's the third part of the test, I'm guessing it's the dynamism one?」(Viare)

「There's a town around twelve days away from Zerupia, I was tasked to go there to acquire and return with their special product. Well, to be specific, it just had to be a special product from any town at least ten days away.

I could have hired some adventurers to gather the necessary materials, but I lack the funds so I personally left to get it」(Stad)

「I feel that you would fail if you had someone else get it」(Viare)

Alice shook her head at Viare's doubtful comment.

「You don't necessarily have to do it yourself. Whether the examinees do it themselves or have others do it for them, it's still using their own resources, be it through connections, money or their own strength.

In the end, if they use Viare's view as the basis, it would require the examiners to observe and confirm every examinees' movements.

It'll be a waste to mobilize so much manpower, especially since there are many still taking the exam and the difficulty of the content is not high」(Alice)

「But the current prime minister's actions must have been observed, how else could he have gotten a government position if they didn't know?」(Viare)

「Even without someone observing him, if his actions were showy enough then it would suffice. For example, investing a large amount of money to buy various special products from all the surrounding towns. This would be enough to start a rumor, correct? With the rumor becoming conviction, the examiners can determine that this person has enormous financial power and also has the courage to utilize it in full when necessary」(Alice)

「Then wouldn't others try to imitate this?」(Kousuke)

Towards Kousuke's inquiry, just like with Viare's, Alice shook her head.

「I've heard that the examinees will fail if their methods are deemed an imitation of someone who passed.

If it was done without prior knowledge or if the examinee truly struggled to materialize the results, then it'll be considered a pass though」(Alice)

As everyone else was feeling enlightened by Alice's explanation, the carriage suddenly stopped. In comparison to the schedule given by the coachmen, this stop was not planned. Becoming curious, Chinton called out to the coachman.

「Well, there are some people blocking the road ahead」(Coachman)

「Can you ask them to move aside for a bit?」(Chinton)

「Yes, I'll ask them. Heeey, we want to go through, would you mind moving to the side for a moment?」(Coachman)

The coachman called out towards the four approaching men.

Showing little reaction to his yell, the four men continued their approach towards the carriage.

「Mm? What's wrong with those fellas?」(Coachman)

「Is something the matter?」(Viare)

Viare asked the coachman after hearing his mumbling.

「Those fellas are holding some vegetables」(Coachman)

「Vegetables? Is it something they harvested?」(Viare)

「If it's from a harvest then they would have a lot more of it and some sort of basket or carriage holding them. Those fellas only have one piece of vegetable each」(Coachman)

「What's up with that?」(Viare)

「Even if you ask me....」(Coachman)

Not understanding how they reached their current condition, the coachman had no choice but to keep the carriage stopped. He would have dashed through them if they looked like bandits, but seeing that none of them had any weapons the coachman was baffled about their identity.

Once the four were close enough the coachman called out to them once more.

「We can't pass if you stay on the road like that. I'm sorry but could you move to the side?」(Coachman)

「Ya'll ain't passin'!」(???)

The four stood side by side to completely block the road. The man holding a pumpkin stepped forward slightly and spoke. The other three was holding a carrot, a radish and a burdock respectively. 【TL: The radish is the Japanese kind, Daikon】

「What do you mean we can't pass? We need to pass.

I don't want to force our way through and hurt you fellas」(Coachman)

『I'm pretty sure they'll dodge if you force your way through though』
(Kousuke)

The coachman earnestly pleaded as he did not want to resort to violence.

「Ya'll wanna pass? Give us them shinies!」(???)

「..... Wha? Y, you fellas are bandits?!」(Coachman)

「YUP!」(Bandit#1?)

「Fellas.. If all of you are bandits then don't you think what you're holding is a bit.. odd?」(Coachman)

「""""""They nice and plump right?""""""」(All four of them)

All four of the 'bandits' proudly raised their vegetables.

Taking a closer look, it's color and shape, they were definitely nice and plump, at least Kousuke thought so as he peeked over the coachman.

He asked for the coachman's opinion too and got a nod back.

「I agree, they look great, but ya'll being bandits and your vegetables.. How are they related?」(Coachman)

「These are camouflaged weapons! Ya jus' noticed? Us just waltzed up to ya'll but did ya'll run?」(Bandit#1)

「The thought of escaping didn't really cross my mind」(Coachman)

「That's right, that's right!」(Bandit#1)

The pumpkin bandit proclaimed proudly.

「If we's been carrying swords and bows, you's plump lambs woulda ran the moment ya'll saw us」(Bandit#1)

With that kind of logic, at first glance their “camouflage” plan was on the right track.

However, amidst his moment of admiration, the coachman felt that their ambush spot was too weak as nothing besides these “bandits” were blocking them.

Compared to the usual bandit ambush, the coachman was still in an advantageous position. Still though, what these “bandits” might do may suddenly flip the table.

「I get that they're camouflaged, but are they really weapons? No, they're definitely not weapons...」(Coachman)

「Ya dissin' vegetables?!」(Bandit#1)

The pumpkin holding bandit was seriously angry... To the point of self-mockery.

「Ya see my pumpkin!? Smashin' this fella on yo heads gonna hurt!」(Bandit#1)

「Obviously...」(Coachman)

「Ya see? A WEAPON!」(Bandit#1)

「Is it wrong to think that you fellas should be using a sword instead?」
(Coachman)

The coachman's opinion was the same as the rest in the carriage.

「Fuu~ Swords are a joke when you's as great as us!

Guess us'n gotta teach ya'll a lesson first!」(Bandit#1)

With his proclamation, the pumpkin “bandit” walked up to a tree that was a little thicker than a light pole.

The pumpkin “bandit” swung his pumpkin at the tree.

Everyone in the carriage felt that the pumpkin would shatter on impact, but they were wrong. The pumpkin didn’t have a single scratch. The tree on the other hand was carved out on the impact point.

「Whaa?!」(Coachman)

The coachman couldn’t help but shout out in shock. Everyone in the carriage were equally shocked.

Next, the carrot “bandit” held his carrot like a dart between his thumb and index finger and threw it at the tree. The carrot spiraled through the air like a bullet and pierced deeply into the trunk.

Furthermore, the radish “bandit” dashed toward the tree and stabbed the radish into the tree. The radish left a clean hole in the tree. That thrust clearly showed a high level of spearmanship.

And finally, the burdock “bandit”. Holding the burdock with one hand, he swung it down hitting nothing but air, but the path in front of him was cleaved open.

None of the vegetables were harmed in any way.

「Wh, wha WHAT ARE YOU!?」(Coachman)

The coachman cried out in fear and surprise.

「The vegetable squad, TEAM NOUGYOU!

Mother Nature is our blade, we’s the baddest of the bads, the ultimate bandits!

Are you afraid? Beg for ya’ll lives! Leave e’ery shinies you’s got and ya’ll can live!」(Bandit#1)

「Urgh...」(Coachman)

【TL: Nougyou = agriculture, but team agriculture sounded awful.. in hindsight the vegetable squad sounds awful too 😊】

Unlike their queer appearance, their skills were real so the coachman began to consider their demands. Much to the coachman's regret, since the road they were on was usually safe with little to no monsters and bandits, he didn't hire any guards.

When he noticed, the carriage was already surrounded by the 4 vegetable bandits. The coachman sighed heavily since he knew that if he tried to do anything suspicious, they would immediately attack.

「Everyone, please accept their demands」(Coachman)

The coachman collected himself and announced.

「I am against this! I finally got my hands on this special product after much effort! I refuse to let myself get robbed by these thugs!」(Stad)

「I just got these merchandises too...」(Chinton)

「But they're actually strong and we don't have a single guard」(Coachman)

Viare quickly glanced toward Kousuke. Noticing her, Kousuke was about to move but was stopped by Alice. She felt that she could handle this much by herself so she held him back.

And then, Alice whispered quietly towards the coachman.

「Would you like me to blast them away with magic?」(Alice)

「..... Is that alright?」(Coachman)

「Despite how I look, I'm a former adventurer. I was given designated requests in the past as well」(Alice)

「Is that true?」(Coachman)

He was skeptical of her claims since Alice looked so young and frail. The coachman even assumed that she retired because she was too weak to

continue.

「It can't be helped. Here」(Alice)

Alice pulled out her status card and allowed the coachman to view her current abilities.

Seeing the information displayed on the card, the coachman's eyes went wide.

Much less himself, even his adventurer friends could not compare to her strength.

「I.. I... Pl.. Please forgive my rudeness!」(Coachman)

Wanting to prostrate himself, the coachman's face turned blue.

「Keep quiet, you. And don't apologize over this... Alright, keep them distracted for a bit longer while I prepare my spell」(Alice)

「Ro.. Roger!」(Coachman)

With his hope to survive rekindled, the coachman returned his gaze back to the pumpkin bandit to buy some time.

「H, Hey」(Coachman)

「Wut? Hurry and bring them shinies out」(Bandit#1)

「There's someone inside that's refusing. The other's inside are trying to convince him so can you give us a moment?」(Coachman)

「Mm.... fine, make it quick」(Bandit#1)

Since Stad's refusal before was loud, the bandits knew someone inside was being uncooperative so they were convinced by the coachman's story.

「We's ain't got much patience, ya hear?」(Bandit#1)

「G, got it」(Coachman)

The coachman turned back around towards the carriage interior, pretending to tell them the bandit's response.

「S, So.. You fellas have been active around these areas for a while, yes?

It's just, I heard that there weren't any bandits on these roads here」
(Coachman)

「Robbin' fat lambs like ya'll, we's been doin' it for a while yea. You ain't wrong, us'n got here jus' ten days ago. Other roads jus' gittin too hot ya see」
(Bandit#1)

「No wonder. That reminds me, you fellas are the vegetable squad so are there others too?」(Coachman)

Since he needed to buy some time, the coachman asked out of curiosity.

「Ya ya, the grain squad and the fruit squad」(Bandit#1)

「So do all of you grow your own produces?」(Coachman)

「Wha? Ya serious? Of course. We's farmers」(Bandit#1)

「Farmers? Not bandits?」(Coachman)

「A bit a farmer and a bit a bandit」(Bandit#1)

「So why delve into banditry? You can survive well with just farming」
(Coachman)

「Hmph! Ya'll jus' dun understand so keep yo trap shut! Ya know 'bout barren lands? Yea them farms dried up. No harvest, but them fat nobles dun care, we's still taxed the same. Friends, families, we's all suffering but we still gots to pay!

Then yea, big boss came 'round and saved us all when we's felt it was over!」
(Bandit#1)

「And the big boss was using a vegetable weapon too?」(Coachman)

「Big boss's fava beans are #1!」(Bandit#1)

When the beans are launched, due to their irregular shape their trajectory is equally irregular, making them difficult to dodge.

「I can somewhat understand what your big boss is thinking, but why vegetables as weapons?」(Coachman)

Their weapon choice truly baffled the coachman.

At that moment, suddenly, with the carriage as the epicenter, a shockwave exploded out. The trees shook violently and the bandits were blown away.

Unlike the coachman who knew it was Alice's magic, the bandits were in a befuddled state, not understanding what happened. The attack was too sudden for them, none of the bandits were able to protect themselves in time.

They were bleeding, but seeing them struggling to get up, it was clear none were dead.

「Let's see how it went. Oh, I guess it subdued them nicely. Well then, what shall we do with them? Leave them alone or maybe capture and hand them over to the officials?」(Alice)

「Let's bring them in for the officials to handle. It'll be for the best if they can find out the other's locations to make this road safer」(Coachman)

Alice nodded in agreement with the coachman's judgment. He then called out the rest in the carriage to help tie up the bandits before treating their wounds. It was planned to keep them asleep with magic throughout the trip, but if their wounds aren't treated then they would likely constantly groan and moan, making it unbearable.

With all the issues settled, the tied up, unconscious bandits were shoved into the corner of the carriage and the group resumed their travel.

Upon reaching their destination, the coachman explained the situation to the guards and handed the bandits over to them. Afterwards, the bandits were successfully interrogated, but the rest of the bandit organization were too scattered to be fully apprehended. The scale of their organization was clearly a lot larger than what Kousuke's group thought. The amount of individuals suffering from exploitation seemed to be a lot more numerous than expected.

According to the information the guards had, there were two other similar incidents in the area and upon further investigation the conclusion that those

two incidents were incited by two other organizations was met.

One group was the Animal Husbandry team, using their farm animals and eggs as weapons. There were reports that the victims suffered being blinded by the thrown eggs while cows and bulls charged through their ranks.

The other group was the Fisherman Pirates team, using everything the bountiful sea offered. Pierced by shuriken clams, bludgeoned by bonitos, whipped by eels, such things have been reported.

During their harvest or peak seasons, despite the largeness of their organization, the amount of banditry and victims was small due to them being focused on their actual jobs. Thus the gathered information was vague and minimal due to their sporadic activity.

Furthermore, rather than amassing a fortune, many within those organizations are more keen on replacing and re-establishing their previous life before the exploitation. Thanks to that, as long as they get what they want and are able to maintain their lifestyle they will not treat the victims poorly.

Since these bandits are the typical farmers or fishermen, it's difficult to confirm their identities at first glance.

The army was troubled by this since openly capturing all these farmers and fishermen was out of the question.

This unusual situation was actually brought forth by the 3 gods in charge of

agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing respectively.

The “theater and drama” idea that Kousuke provided actually had other ideas mixed in, such as a squadron or a specialist group. Using that as a hint the gods of agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing randomly endowed an individual each with power.

Similar to Rider’s transformation, the three that were endowed with power could “transform” when combating against ‘ruffians’.

The three dubbed themselves as The Crop Slasher, The Crasher of Games, and The 100% Catcher to combat villainy and oppression. And as if destined, the three met and created the “Worker 3 Squad”.

Soon financial backers and tool creators joined as avid supporters, swelling the size of the “Worker 3 Squad”.

The 3 gods at fault did not do this to protect the innocent, but to get some entertainment from the various consequences brought about by the squad’s actions.

They were just indulging in their self-interest.

Despite this clearly interfering with the lives of mortals, the rest of the gods allowed it just for its entertainment value. Either way, it wasn’t a world changing thing.

Oblivious that he was the catalyst for this incident, Kousuke was swaying in the rocky carriage. It wasn't until many years later that he learns of the "Worker 3 Squad's" existence.

Without pause, the group arrived at the port city, got onto a ship heading to Sebushik and waved their farewell to the Kalhode continent.

Five days after since they boarded the ship, Kousuke was alone on the continent of Ezenbia that was below Kalhode.

He was rescued on the beach, where he was buried head first. This was the current situation of his return trip to the Sebushik continent.